Between the Lines: Writing Ethics Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

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Between the Lines: Writing Ethics Pedagogy

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This research project seeks to establish the degree to which morality and ethics are implicated in writing pedagogy. While writing, rhetoric, and ethics have long been interlinked in the traditions of rhetorical pedagogy, perhaps most famously in Socrates' admonishment of the Sophists, postmodern skepticism has, in part, diminished the centrality of morality and ethics to college writing instruction. I arrive at this project prickled by my own assumptions that writing might well be taught aside from moral and ethical considerations. To this end, I curate a collection of representative work applying the concepts of ethics to composition pedagogy research and scholarship from 1990 to the present. This work is necessary because the theory and practice of ethics in composition studies is diverse and diffuse. While a few scholars have made ethics a primary concern (for example, Marilyn Cooper; Peter Mortensen; James Porter) and others who have sought to map the disciplinary engagement (for example, Paul Dombrowski; Laura Micciche), treatments of ethics in composition scholarship remain fragmented and idiomatic. This research project draws together the streams of thought informing composition's diverse engagement with ethics to provide a representative sampling of approaches and ethical treatments pertaining to writing pedagogy. My approach is to seek to understand what prompts scholars to engage ethics: What problems and questions drive writing scholars toward ethics? And what do these scholars hope to accomplish by doing ethics? Employing a descriptive method grounded in feminist

interpretations of pluralist ethics, this research project collects ethical interventions into writing scholarship interested in writing tradition, theory, research methods, and social advocacy. This research projects concludes by considering how writing ethics has transformed my writing praxis.

DEDICATION

For ευδαιμονια.

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Special thanks to Sherrie Gradin for coaching me through this effort. She somehow managed to do everything right and make it look effortless. If ever there was a guiding angel of dissertations, Sherrie is that shining star. I owe much of the coherence and rigor of this work to her penetrating questions, and I fear I may not have even begun the trek if Sherrie had not somehow, and against all reasonable hope, saw a spark, a slight glimmer of an idea, which she gently guided me toward.

I want to thank my family for their love and encouragement – especially my mother Karen who never stopped believing in me. And finally, I want to recognize Talitha for her emotional and intellectual companionship. Talitha has not only helped me to endure, she has taught me that with a friend as magical and marvelous as Talitha, anything is possible.

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CHAPTER 1: WRITING ETHICS

I've always had an almost moral suspicion of writing.

Michel Foucault, *Speech Begins*

I became interested in writing ethics late in my PhD studies. I can pin it to a

particular moment when I was sitting at a favorite restaurant with two peers. We were

scheduled to teach three sections of first-year composition in tandem. We met to

coordinate our course outcomes and assignments. There, quite unexpectedly and not

without some shame, I found myself arguing against teaching rhetoric. My concern was

not with rhetoric in support of analysis and critical thinking. Rather, I found myself

arguing against teaching students to write more persuasively through a studied use of

rhetoric. I don't want to train yet another salesperson for the workplace, I muttered.

My peers, both dyed-in-the-wool advocates of the rhetorical tradition and its

pedagogical and practical value for teaching writing – as I thought I was up to that

moment – looked concerned. Of course, they countered, we would spend the majority of

our classroom time engaged in analysis. Where was the harm in having students practice

employing rhetoric for their own goals? They pitched a multimodal project to showcase

the students' rhetorical skills. I was unmoved. I don't need any more marketing messages

in my life either, I said, especially unexamined ones. They asked me to explain. I'm

grateful they did because during the course of that lunch, I began to glimpse the kernel of

my discontent that eventually resulted in this project.

The Curator and Catalogue of Writing Ethics

In this dissertation, I curate a catalogue of representative work applying the

concepts of ethics to composition pedagogy research and scholarship from, roughly, 1990

to the present. This work is necessary because the theory and practice of ethics in

composition studies is diverse and diffuse. While many scholars have made ethics a primary concern (e.g. Cooper; Mortensen; Porter) and others who have sought to map the disciplinary engagement (e.g. Dombrowski; Micciche), treatments of ethics in composition scholarship remain fragmented and idiomatic. My goal is to place together scholarship detailing composition's diverse engagement with ethics since 1990 and apply a wide-angle view of the various approaches and ethical work undertaken for the purpose of teaching writing. My conceptual frame is to suggest a kind of *wunderkammer* of writing ethics. Susan H. Delagrange suggests the 16th-century "cabinets of wonder" known as *wunderkammer* provide models of "visual provocation" by allowing for disparate objects to be placed together and affording visitors an opportunity to "manipulate and arrange objects to discover new meanings in their relationships" (Delagrange). In the shape of a *wunderkammer*, I present my research into writing ethics. Where connections between texts are explicit, I have indicated so in my descriptions, and where the connections are less explicit, I have left gaps, abruptions, openings between texts.

In the sense of *The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0*, I cast myself in the role of curator by "collecting, assembling, sifting, structuring, interpreting" the objects of this *wunderkammer* (UCLA). The catalogue then becomes that "with which to frame a new rhetorical practice of inquiry and discovery" (Delagrange). My interest lies in writing ethics, so I have curated many "objects-to-think-with" concerning writing ethics, which may "enable us to reflect concretely on abstract concepts and relationships" (Delagrange).

As the curator, I assume a responsibility for the care of the texts I collect. My interest lies in preserving texts that I consider important to a discussion of writing ethics pedagogy. I am curating the conditions for a conversation that I believe is important to teaching writing. My aim is to share these texts, and specifically, to facilitate the sharing of a catalogue of texts I find important to thinking about writing as an ethical practice. Media theorist and philosopher Wolfgang Sützl suggests sharing presents "a limit to exchange," by displacing the global, market economy with a personal, local economy of "being with others," which may "form a basis for a freedom that eludes the next exchange operation" ("Being" 12). In other words, sharing affords different modes of doing research and being in the world "away from privileged objects, gestures, and discourses, and competitive subjects" (Sützl, "Being" 12). As such, I embrace curation as an alternative economy for research based upon an "anti-economy of sharing" (Sützl, "Anti-Economy" 122) By sharing freely, I confound the market-based system of value. Instead, I suggest another set of values, another way of being with one another outside the market economy.

<div align="center">Writing Ethics as the Deliberate Practice of Freedom</div>

As a result of this inquiry, I have come to see ethics as tantamount to teaching college writing – in bell hooks' terms – as "a practice of freedom" (hooks 4). Writing as an ethical practice, I will suggest over the course of this dissertation, addresses hooks' desire that education address "whole" human beings in the sense of not just "striving for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" – knowledge which promotes one's "well-being" (hooks 15).

Writing as an ethical practice of freedom has a considerable history in Western civilization. Aristotle describes ethics as the practical art of living the best life possible (that is, the most fulfilling, meaningful, and happiest life given the social, cultural, and material circumstances) (Polansky 2). Foucault builds upon Aristotle's work in describing ethics as the deliberate practice of self in which a subject explores what freedom any given subjectivity affords – "the ethical research which allows individual liberty to be founded" (*The Final* 19). Through Foucault, I understand the subject of discourse is caught in a loop in which "liberty is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty" (*The Final* 4). Speaking schematically, liberty for Foucault requires that one reflect upon "relationships of power," and one way of doing this is through writing, and through writing, one exercises or enacts liberty (*The Final* 11).

For hooks, "to educate as the practice of freedom" is to "teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students" (12). It requires teachers engage the "whole" student and provide an education that "is healing to the uninformed and unknowing spirit," and "knowledge that is meaningful" (hooks 19). hooks suggests the "movement which makes education the practice of freedom" is one that necessarily "enables transgressions – a movement against and beyond boundaries" (12). hooks suggests transgression, whereas, Foucault suggests we arrive at freedom by the deliberate practice of ethics, which entails the methodological testing of one's limits, and necessarily, transgression of these limits. Both hooks and Foucault assume education is not a value-neutral enterprise; rather, education functions either as an instrument of domination supporting hegemonic interests, or it functions as a practice of freedom

empowering students to enact transgressive practices leading toward personal

transformation.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Ethics

The literature from composition scholars I review demonstrates a sustained

disciplinary engagement with writing issues related to ethics and morality in general. But

what composition scholars mean by "ethics" is not made entirely clear in the reading.

Editors Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan M. Hunter of one of the landmark texts in

composition taking up writing ethics, explain, for example:

> Yet perhaps because of its frequent and enduring place in history, ethics has
>
> become a word that is easily tossed off, as if it had a single, shared meaning […]
>
> how the word ethics has been used and what it is meant to suggest has taken on
>
> different shades of meaning in relation to the historical, philosophical, and even
>
> the personal and professional moments in which it has been used. (1)

Further exasperating this diversity of thought is the degree to which scholars

interchange the terms ethics and morality. What do we lose when composition scholars

equate ethics and morality in their scholarship? What is gained? Or does it really matter?

My contention is that it does matter, and to the extent that when we leave these terms

fuzzy, we lose an important capacity to reflect critically on writing pedagogy. When

morality and ethics are conflated, writing as a mode of resistance is diminished because

writing as the practice of freedom is grounded in one's ability to transgress moral limits

ethically. In other words, scholarship that conflates morality and ethics confuses, to some

degree, the means and ends. Thus, a large part of my effort is directed at clarifying what

we are talking about when we talk about ethics and morality to foreground ethics as a means to critique moral hegemony.

In 2008, Ellen Barton touted the particularly well-suitedness of composition scholars to contribute to discussions on ethics in research methods "based on our critical perspective on language as rhetorical and our multiple methods of analyzing the language of ethics as it actually takes place in particular contexts and decision-making interactions" ("Further" 599). I admit to a similar enthusiasm for compositionists' work in ethics. By the nature of our work, researching, teaching, and practicing writing, we are positioned to pose very interesting questions about ethics. An ethics-based approach to writing does have an accompanying occupational hazard in which everything begins to appear in terms of ethics. Jim Corder, writing in the *Freshman English News* in 1974 declares: "All discourse may be taken as ethical discourse" (1).

Thus, I am well advised not to attempt to define a too-familiar term such as "ethics" once-and-for-all for writing pedagogy; rather, I am interested in what writers are doing with their writing and what writers might yet do. How might writing still surprise us? To this end, I have narrowed for consideration texts that suggest an awareness of the discussion of ethical and/ or moral issues of concern to writing pedagogy.

Methodology

I am in accord with Duncan Carter and Sherrie Gradin who suggest "academic discourse is personal, expressive. Or at least it should be" (ix). As such, I have attempted to develop my academic and personal expression in my methodology. I am interested in what ethics affords compositionists – what ethics does. I am interested in what prompts scholars to engage ethics: What is the problem that suggests ethics? What is the question

that leads one to engage ethics? How are ethics invoked in the context of writing? In short, my interest lies in understanding the problems and questions that drive scholars to ethics, which I hope may provide a glimpse of what ethics might yet do for writing and writers.

My research method is to curate a catalogue of texts interested in doing ethics in the context of writing pedagogy. The format in which I have presented these texts, as a *wunderkammer* or catalogue of writing ethics, affords me two methodological points. First, my catalogue of writing ethics allows me to place disparate and disconnected texts together in a flat organizational schema. By placing these divergent texts together, I am better able "to reflect concretely on abstract concepts and relationships," and to "manipulate and arrange objects to discover new meanings in their relationships" (Delagrange). In other words, the *wunderkammer* presents an open invitation to all interested parties to share in its meaning and materials.

A second methodological point is my assumption of readerly participation. Laura R. Micciche develops curation as a "distributive act" in which she envisions writing as sharing rather than as "a repository for real or invented identity and discrete expression of authorship" ("Writing Material" 494). Micciche suggests Geoffrey Sirc advances a similar methodology in the essay "Box-Logic." Micciche explains that for Sirc, the goal of the curated collection "is not coherence or linear argumentation" ("Writing Material" 495). Instead, Micciche suggests that similar to new materialists, "Sirc configures agency and energy as emergent not from one site of meaning – that is, a text – but from a conglomeration of source material linked in diverse, often unpredictable designs" ("Writing Material" 495).

The discordant design of the *wunderkamme*r invites unpredictable designs by inviting readers to connect ideas and texts. The curator stands aside so that others might find their own connections. It is the curator's interested distance that underwrites my effort "to create narrative, identity, community, or other significant meanings" without the danger of imposing an overarching meaning upon the collection of texts (Micciche, "Writing Material" 494).

My stance toward my catalogue is that of curator. Curation is an "augmented scholarly practice" that scholars working in the digital humanities embrace (UCLA). As curator, I have collected samples of composition scholars doing ethics, and I have placed them together, side-by-side, to better glimpse the abstract relationships between these moments and to try and understand what scholars are doing with ethics – to identify and describe what I observe. As curator, I am not interested in "an ever more impossible mastery" of writing ethics; rather, I embrace the "tactility and mutability of local knowledge" in meaning making (UCLA). Finally, as curator of this catalogue of writing ethics, I have sought to imply "a spatialization of the sort of critical and narrative tasks" associated with discursive work (UCLA). Thus, I have adopted a directional schema of composition scholarship to describe where compositionists arrive from when they do ethics.

I contend that ethics is particularly well-suited to this approach because ethics is concerned with doing. Ethics is doing ethics, where doing ethics is the practice of judgment leading toward the best possible result given the circumstances (see Traer). Given this practical sense of ethics, clearly, we must recognize the importance of ethics (of judgment) to communication, but this relationship has become obscured in the

scholarship; however, a committed core of scholars have made doing ethics an important feature of their scholarship. And it is through them I have discovered the affinity of ethics and writing pedagogy. I am interested in what brought these compositionists to ethics, and in particular, what I might learn about writing pedagogy from these composition scholars.

Provisional Framework

My literature review suggests some commonalities in the concerns that led compositionists to turn toward ethics. Four directions of thought take shape: tradition, theory, research, and politics. First, and certainly the oldest stream of thought, arises from compositionists closely linked to the rhetorical tradition. The interconnectedness of rhetoric and ethics has a rich history in rhetorical pedagogy, beginning perhaps most famously with Socrates' admonishment of the Sophists for their amoral rhetoric, and continuing through Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian's "good man" speaking well, to the present where compositionists expert in tradition confront the challenges new theories present writing pedagogy. A second stream of thought about ethics emerges from compositionists who embrace poststructuralist and postmodern theory, and in so doing, update older models of writing and communication. For example, Marilyn C. Cooper rejects older static, context models of writing, and this eventually results in her description of an ecological model in which writing is understood beyond the immediate context to consider the larger ecologies and histories in which it emerges.

Writing research and student professionalization pedagogies represent a third stream of doing ethics in composition scholarship. Qualitative researchers arrive at ethics seeking parameters for designing studies and standard practices for discussing their

research with institutional oversight committees. Qualitative writing research collectively powers the "ethical turn" composition scholarship takes in the 1990s, marking a growing interest in ethics and research methods and administration. A fourth, catch-all stream of scholarship taking up ethics bubbles up in the interventions of critical pedagogy, cultural studies, and feminisms. Here, the close association of politics to ethics affords politically invested pedagogies a vocabulary and set of concepts for thinking about individuals (ethics) in larger social contexts (politics).

I recognize that schemas of how ethics-related work in composition scholarship might be organized exist (e.g. Dombrowski; Micciche); however, these schemas are fragmented or specialized. While I assume my study will prove similarly fragmented and specialized, I nevertheless offer an additional account – an attempt to describe what compositionists do with ethics. I want to know what ethics helps me understand about the problems and concerns of contemporary writing pedagogy?

I pause here to describe a few methodological limitations to this project. First, the *wunderkammer* presents a very wide view of writing ethics, and such a broad scope means that I have in many cases sacrificed depth. One criticism that is earned is that I have introduced many perspectives but they remain schematic. One might fault the *wunderkammer* for underrepresenting important ethical questions raised by, for example, internetworked writing, social media, computers and writing, and so on. Similarly, I have been reductive in my representation of feminism(s), or materialist methods and perspectives. At this point, the *wunderkammer* runs wide, but it does not run deep. I invite readers to view gaps in my project as openings, as ways into the discussion of writing as an ethical practice. The *wunderkammer* is not collected to write history. Rather,

at least as I intend it here, it is an anti-history – an attempt to capture in a moment a few disparate texts important to teaching writing.

A second methodological concern I have is my privileged perspective as an able-bodied, heterosexual, white, male who arrives at this project from a middle-class family background. I acknowledge that to some degree my privilege aligns to hegemonic "ideals," which has historically afforded me greater access and privilege than marginal identities. And I recognize that my privileged life experiences diminish my capacities to recognize and empathize with marginal perspectives. Working from an understanding of how my various, privileged identity markers have afforded me, and continue to afford me, material, social, and cultural advantages, I strive to be inclusive of and receptive to the unassimilable differences marking each of us. In short, I understand and acknowledge the debt that privileged identities owe the larger communities in which they are situated. In this case, I have sought to be representative of feminist, queer, LGBT, racial, and cultural identities, among others, in my research.

<div align="center">Provisional Senses of Ethics and Morality</div>

As is fairly common in composition scholarship, my sense of ethics rests upon the narrow field of thought Aristotle described as concerned with how a person should achieve the best possible life (see Duffy, "Ethical"; Porter, *Rhetorical*). Aristotelian ethics, then, is the practical art of living, which for Aristotle requires one actively cultivate excellence of character and act virtuously. *Eudaemonia* (ευδαιμονια), the highest happiness or experience of the highest good, is attainable only by living an ethical life. But what exactly is ethical? Or moral? Are they different?

In the essay "Just Comp," Don J. Kraemer offers a helpful distinction between ethics and morality for composition pedagogy. Kraemer draws upon American legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin's 2011 book, *Justice Hedgehogs*, to distinguish between "ethics, which is the study of how to live well, and morality, which is the study of how we must treat other people" (Dworkin qtd. in Kraemer 92). Morality, Kraemer explains, "involves commandments, rules, and laws," whereas, ethics involves the question of what it means to each of us to fulfill his or her life" (92). Kraemer cites an analogy Dworkin develops at some length: "Morality, broadly understood, defines the lanes that separate swimmers. It stipulates when one must cross lanes to help and what constitutes forbidden lane-crossing harm. Ethics governs how one must swim in one's own lane to have swum well" (qtd. in Kraemer 92).

I am shameless to simplify Dworkin's apt swim-lane analogy even further to form the provisional sense of ethics I begin with. Morality, I broadly associate with the rules and standards of a given game (for example, language); ethics, then, determines how one plays the game and if one has "swum well" – or to continue my example, if one has written well.

The Moral Problem

Kraemer's distinction between "morality" as the game and "ethics" as the play reminds me that there is something lost when the terms are used interchangeably. I insist writing pedagogy must reserve separate meanings for morality and ethics – to preserve ethics as a distinct practice providing (among other things) approaches to moral questions. "The moral problem," Foucault writes, "is the practice of liberty" (*The Final* 4). I understand Foucault's moral problem as a question of how one is to practice liberty

when confronted with inexhaustible and potentially oppressive moral prescriptions. In terms of writing pedagogy, the moral problem is how does one practice writing as liberty when confronted with prescriptive (normalizing) linguistic, cultural, and social practices which preexist writers? The problem, then, is properly characterized "moral" but the address lies elsewhere – in what I call ethical practice.

In an interview near his untimely death, Foucault explains that the problem at the center of his various investigations has always been "the problem of the relationship between subject and truth," and specifically, "how does the subject enter into a certain game of truth" (*The Final* 9). Ethics, as I understand it through Foucault, is the deliberate practice of self to discover what freedom any given "game of truth" might afford. For writing pedagogy, then, ethics describes what a writer does when confronted with pre-existing linguistic, cultural, social (moral) codes which define the legibility, authority, and legitimacy of one's writing. In this sense, writing is the "moral problem" writing ethics seeks to address.

<div align="center">Composition by Moral Fiat</div>

From the beginning, college writing instruction in America has been a moral project. Robert Connors suggests college writing instruction emerged "as a field decreed necessary and continued by social fiat" (*Composition-Rhetoric* 7). The fiat Connors identifies is precipitated by a perceived lack of writing proficiency of new applicants flooding universities during the American post-Civil War Reconstruction period. This lack of proficiency in writing translated into a lack of propriety. The link between moral rectitude and speaking and writing extends back at least to Roman oratory pedagogy, where Cicero, for example, explains that speakers who demonstrate "good taste and style

in speaking […] are made to appear upright, well-bred and virtuous men" (328). And later, Quintilian echoes this idea when he draws upon Cato the Elder's definition of rhetoric translated as "the good man skilled at speaking" to insist that the perfect orator "must above all," be "a good man" (389, 412-3).

To some degree, neoclassical rhetorical pedagogy was the prevailing sentiment in English studies when the moral project of college writing instruction dawns in America and begins rapidly expanding. For example, the 1862 *Morrill Act* establishes new public universities, which are formative to what Connors calls "composition-rhetoric" by beginning to diversify access to college education and opening pathways for underrepresented others. Connors explains, "from the province of a small group of elite students, college education became" more "available to the masses"; "colleges" Connors writes, "were flooded with students who needed to be taught to write, who needed to be taught correctness in writing," and who needed to be "run through the system in great numbers" (9). This influx of students in the years between 1885 and 1900 Connors describes as the "consolidation of composition-rhetoric," precipitated a crisis of "pressing social issues that demanded solutions" (11). Composition by social fiat is, I suggest, is more accurately stated as composition by moral fiat.

As for the "social issues" of the new student influx, chief among these appears to be writing. Amid this climate, a new, scandalous report surfaced suggesting "more than half of the candidates – the products of America's best preparatory schools – [had] failed the Harvard [written entrance] exams" (Connors 11). The "illiteracy of American boys" becomes a national obsession stoked by journalists, and by the mid 1880s, Adam Sherman Hill, proctor of Harvard's entrance exam, mounts a response by instituting a

mandatory remedial writing course inconspicuously titled, English A, until the illiteracy

crisis passes (Connors 11). The crisis appears not to have passed as English A is still with

us as the early prototype of the current, often mandatory, first-year composition course,

which I plan to discuss further in Chapter 2. My intention is merely to suggest that

writing is entwined with morality, and that perhaps, I am justified to call it, at root, a

moral project, or even, a moral conspiracy.

<div align="center">Toward Writing Ethics</div>

Through this curated catalogue I intend to raise to attention the breadth and depth

of composition pedagogy scholarship taking up ethics, which is important given these

unethical times.[1] The scholarship I curate assumes writing pedagogy is inescapably moral

and that the practice of teaching writing ought to account for this somehow. This

literature also assumes a close relationship between writing and ethics that is

fundamentally generative. When we compose, we assemble, connect, and create. Ethics is

similarly generative in considering what action, choice, or judgment will bring about the

best results. I am reminded here of Mary Rose O'Reilly's question: "Can we teach

English so that people stop killing each other?" (9). This question suggests that morality

(for example, thou shalt not kill) is probably not the problem – the Laws (i.e. moral

Laws) are explicit, yet people still kill one another; rather, the issue seems to reside at the

register of ethics – how people play the game of life – all the choices leading up to that

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[1] Consider, for example, the latest book in the USU Press "Current Arguments in Composition" series, Bruce McComiskey's monograph, *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition*, which asserts "the Trump effect must be countered with ethical and rhetorical standards that prevent the future development of bullshit, fake news, and ethos and pathos at the expense of logos" (44). McComiskey even goes so far to suggest the "unethical rhetoric that has emerged in our post-truth world" must be countered "as quickly and strongly as we can" in that it directly jeopardizes "the fate of our discipline," "and that's not bullshit" (6, 44).

final choice to kill. In other words, perhaps people are "killing each other" not for a lack of applicable moral prohibitions but for a lack of ethics – for a loss of a sense of responsibility to the importance of how one plays the game over the endgame. In this sense, teaching writing requires teaching writing ethics, to describe the various choices writers make. By writing, we emerge as subjects in/of a language game; writing ethics form a useful frame for discovering the field of play, the possible moves, even establishing if one has "swum well."

Chapter Summaries

In this first chapter, I introduce my topic and explain my interest in it. I also introduce the conceptual framework for my unique historical method. My frame considers the moral and ethical horizons of composition scholarship and marks the streams of thought pursuing ethics in response to specific pedagogical problems. These problems, for me, hover around questions of tradition, theory, research methodology, and advocacy. I then close the first chapter by suggesting writing is a moral problem of which writing ethics is a response.

In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth review of the research of composition scholars arriving at ethics from the general direction of the rhetorical tradition. Chief among these scholars, for me, are Patricia Bizzell, Deborah Holdstein, and James Porter. Their scholarship and the scholarship here looks to the rhetorical tradition to respond to challenges posed by new theoretical approaches to writing pedagogy. Scholars sharing this approach draw upon a rich literary history in which ethics and writing are intertwined. Popular notions of ethics in this stream include virtue ethics, character ethics, and ethical relativism.

In Chapter 3, I continue reviewing composition scholarship's treatment of ethics by considering work from scholars who have embraced poststructuralist and postmodern theory, and who arrive at ethics, at least in part, to address the effects of these theoretical assumptions on contemporaneous models of writing. For me, these scholars are the mapmakers, and Marilyn Cooper, Lester Faigley, and Kurt Spellmeyer are representative of the scholarship providing deep theoretical insights into the nature of writing and writing situations. Cooper's ecological model of writing, for example, reimagines the context-based models forwarded by her predecessors ("The Ecology"; see also, Bitzer; Toulmin), and in doing so, opens the way for new, postmodern interpretations of writing ethics and posthuman radicalizations of writers and writing.

Chapter 4 documents the "ethical turn" in English studies driven by the scholarship and leadership efforts of writing researchers engaged in innovative research methodologies. Ellen Cushman, Andrea Lunsford, and Peter Mortensen are among the luminaries arriving at ethics from the direction of writing research and professionalization. The scholarship I review demonstrates how qualitative research practices adopted from social sciences and anthropology help to drive interest in ethics as researchers seek to design more ethical studies by developing more reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations with their research subjects. I also included here are the efforts of scholars to professionalize the field of composition studies and to assert a leadership position in institutional research settings.

In Chapter 5, I describe composition scholarship arriving at ethics concerned with social justice and identity politics through classroom advocacy. Here writing is an agent of both oppression and liberation. Critical pedagogues and feminist scholars including

Elizabeth Ellsworth, Christy Friend, and Donna LeCourt, arrive at ethics addressing social inequities, reflected in classrooms. Ethics in this line of thinking often presents an opportunity to re-think or challenge existing biases (for example, heteronormativity) by affording some degree of play presented by new writing technologies, which very often, are cast in the optimistic light of innovations poised to contribute to better social equity, as, for example, online writing afforded some "play" in what gender one might assume online.

In Chapter 6, I explain what this research means for my own teaching. How has my research into writing ethics informed my writing pedagogy? This section explains how my understanding of writing ethics informs my approach to teaching writing. I also assess my project and describe what remains, for me, to be done in writing ethics.

CHAPTER 2: ETHICS AND RHETORICAL PEDAGOGICAL TRADITION

> Concepts are philosophical precisely because they create possibilities for thinking beyond what is already known or assumed. [...] A concept (in this radical sense) does not just add one more word to our vocabulary; it renders many of our present terms incoherent.
>
> Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*

In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth review of composition scholarship arriving at ethics from the general direction of composition and the rhetorical tradition in response, in part, to theoretical discourse of the moment. Exemplars of the scholarship presented here, Patricia Bizzell, Deborah Holdstein, and James Porter, draw upon rhetorical tradition to respond to theoretical challenges, which threaten the coherence of the terms and concepts central to teaching writing, for example, subjectivity (cf. Faigley). Scholars arriving at ethics from rhetorical pedagogy enjoy a long, scholarly tradition in which ethics and writing are intertwined. The scholars here self-consciously build upon historical precedent, to create innovative re-workings of tradition that respond to postmodern theory and the accompanying anxieties about the effects of postmodern theory upon teaching.

Rhetorical Tradition and Ethics

An enduring engagement with ethics in composition scholarship arrives with scholarship interested in the rhetorical pedagogical tradition. For example, James E. Porter argues persuasively for the importance of both rhetoric and ethics to writing based on their association in the pedagogical tradition of rhetoric. Porter pulls from Socrates, Aristotle, and others to describe a postmodern writing ethics, or as he would come to call it: "critical rhetorical ethics" (*Rhetorical Ethics* 145). Porter, writing in 2008, explains what he means by ethics and rhetorical ethics:

How we should act with one another is the central focus of ethics, and how that

interaction with one another is established through acts of discourse delineates the

province of rhetorical ethics – a pretty vast province as it turns out. Rhetorical

ethics, as I define it, has to do with questions about human relations as they are

constructed and maintained through acts of discourse. (xiv)

I plan to discuss Porter further below; here, I merely need to suggest the

proximity of the ethical tradition to composition scholars working in the rhetorical

tradition. I suggest that partly due to this proximity, we see many concepts and methods

of ethics quietly imported with the rhetorical tradition as rhetoric is increasingly linked to

college writing pedagogy in America.

Anti-Foundationalism in Writing and Ethics

In 1990, Patricia Bizzell stands upon the divide between emerging cultural studies

tracks of composition and those committed to the traditions of rhetoric and composition

by linking composition's "rhetorical turn" to the "anti-foundationalism" taking hold of

theoretical discourse at the time ("Beyond" 664). Anti-foundationalism assumes that "all

knowledge is non-foundational," which appears to demote knowledge because it can no

longer represent Truth, but in another sense, the one Bizzell forwards, "the discourse used

to frame and promulgate knowledge" gains a "new importance" ("Beyond" 664). The

"rhetorical turn," then, is the recognition of a new primacy of rhetoric to the "the

discourse used to frame and promulgate knowledge" – the primacy of persuasion to

meaning, or as Bizzell suggests: "Whatever we believe, we believe only because we have

been persuaded" ("Beyond" 664). For Bizzell, the way through the anxiety of "anti-

foundationalism" is to embrace the rhetorical nature of knowledge production, and in fact, use our rhetorical savvy to improve upon old, patriarchal models ("Beyond" 674).

By 1992, Bizzell is clearly interested in writing ethics, urging the readers of an *ADE Bulletin* to "come out into the open on the topic of our moral commitments – to accept openly the traditional responsibility of liberal education to form students' values," and finally "admit to teaching virtue" ("The Politics" 5). Bizzell acknowledges the "the imposition of ideological agendas" is "morally questionable," but some agendas are better than others, and so, "our moral sensibility motivates us to promote particular ideological agendas, or if you prefer, particular ethical positions" ("The Politics" 1). For Bizzell, values and beliefs are the stuff of writing, but a general climate of skepticism has served to chase morality out of classrooms, which Bizzell reads as an attempt to disempower teachers. Bizzell writes: "Indeed, one might read the history of composition studies as a series of attacks on classroom uses of power ("The Politics" 1). In response to these attacks, Bizzell offers virtue.

Virtue has a long history in the rhetorical tradition, but here, Bizzell sets virtue against ideological critique – the suggestion that teachers necessarily import their ideological and political biases into the classroom. Bizzell points to Isocrates' views on virtue, in which he would not teach virtue as some transcendental measure of goodness. Instead, he taught values, "not derived from some transcendental realm," but "from the traditions of his community" ("The Politics" 6). The writing classroom is, for Bizzell, to some degree, this community, which means values as virtues need to be front-and-center in the classroom. However, Bizzell acknowledges a problem with her approach. "The

problem," Bizzell writes, "is how to talk about such values without promoting

exclusions" ("The Politics" 6).

For Bizzell, virtue ethics provides a set of terms and practices which suggest a

way to explore one's freedom, and contrarily, the effects of dominant discourse on

subjects. In these terms, student agency is enacted through virtue and accumulated right

action – self-making. An example of a virtue, or value, Bizzell wishes to impart is a sense

of social justice, or more specifically, "egalitarian world view" ("The Politics" 6). There

is a precedent for teaching virtue in writing instruction, but what some critics call the

"bag of virtues" approach to teaching has waned in America since the Civil War

Reconstruction Period (cf. Friend, "Resisting"). Here, then, I want to suggest Bizzell,

through her interest in writing ethics, reworks traditional virtue into an innovative

response to ideological critique of writing pedagogy.

<div align="center">Efficacy and Ethics</div>

Where Bizzell explores virtue ethics as a pedagogical strategy for developing

egalitarian classroom practices, Steven B. Katz, considers the effects of discourse without

ethics. Katz argues that "an ethic of expediency underlies technical writing and

deliberative rhetoric" – an ethic "predominant in Western culture," and "at least partially

responsible for the holocaust" (259). He traces the origins of the rhetorical tradition's

predilection for expediency back to Aristotle in whose "treatment of deliberative

rhetoric," according to Katz, "expediency seems to become an ethical end in itself" – one

"we are in the habit of giving […] too much free reign" (261). For Katz, expediency too

often necessitates a collective *ethos* – a position individuals step behind in the

administering a system. Katz reminds his readers that it was precisely a collective *ethos* and rhetorical expediency that allowed the Nazis to operationalize death camps.

Katz paints a stark picture of an epistemic rhetoric unhitched from ethics. This has been a concern since at least Socrates, and Katz, like Socrates, warns writing teachers of their moral presumption weighting rhetorical expediency in writing pedagogies. Katz writes:

> Do we, as teachers and writers and scholars, contribute to this ethos by our writing theory, pedagogy, and practice when we consider techniques of document design, audience adaptation, argumentation, and style without also considering ethics? Do our methods, for the sake of expediency, themselves embody and impart the ethic of expediency? (271)

On the next page, Katz's commitment to writing ethics comes into focus. He urges composition scholars to recognize "the essentially ethical character of all rhetoric, including our writing theory, pedagogy, and practice," as well as "the role that expediency plays in rhetoric" (272).

Katz's response to the potentially heartless machinations of collective *ethos* and rhetorical efficacy is to situate ethics within rhetoric, to make it unthinkable to practice rhetoric without ethics. Katz writes: "We no longer have the luxury of considering ethics outside the realm of rhetoric, as in the Platonic model of knowledge, for the holocaust casts serious doubt upon this model" (272). Katz does not provide a model of how ethics might be tied to rhetoric in the writing classroom, but his skepticism of social epistemic discourse represents, here, a contrast to Bizzell's embrace of rhetorical epistemic. I turn

now to James E. Porter who represents, for me, the best of both these scholars'
inclinations.

<div align="center">The Rhetorical Turn</div>

In 1993, writing in a collection of essays exploring the rhetorical turn of English
studies edited by Thersea Enos and Stuart C. Brown, James E. Porter begins outlining his
postmodern writing ethics.

Ethics in the postmodern sense, then, does not refer to a static body of
foundational principles, laws, or procedures; it is not to be confused with particular moral
codes or particular sets of statements about what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior
or practice ("Developing" 223).

Porter articulates a startling, new view of ethics as decision making. Porter
explains:

> Ethics is not a set of answers but a mode of questioning and a manner of
> positioning. That questioning certainly involves principles—but it always
> involves *mediating* between competing principles and *judging* those principles in
> light of particular circumstances. Ethics is decision making—but it is decision
> making that involves question and critique. ("Developing" 223, emphasis mine)

Ethics as a practical art of decision making in postmodernity where truth is
assumed to be contingent, situational, and rhetorical, would seem quite valuable. Another
interesting point for me is Porter's notion of rhetoric as "mediating" and ethics "judging"
(223). Importantly, Porter situates judgment (ethics) within the rhetorical situation –
effectively making judgment rhetorical – "a mode of questioning and a manner of
positioning" (223). To a constructivist image of social-epistemic rhetoric Porter offers

ethics as a critical apparatus to support judgment in the new conceptual realm of postmodern theory through the provocative overlapping of rhetorical tradition, moral philosophy, and writing pedagogy.

Porter forwards, in 1993, ethics as an alternative to the binary opposition of moral absolutism and relativism. Porter's proximity to tradition informs his response, linking back to Aristotle's ethics, and in particular, to *phronesis* (φρονεισις) – practical judgment and everyday know-how. *Phronesis* is an important idea for Aristotle because it frees him from accounting to Plato's idea of transcendental Truths when dealing with practical truths, which he identifies as ethics and politics. For Aristotle, the practical arts are practiced for the expressed purpose of living the best possible life.

Phronesis, for Porter, links judgment to rhetorical action, or at another scale, ethics to epistemic rhetoric. The rhetorical turn, when seen through Porter's early work, represents a turn from moral *Truth* toward ethical *truths* – a displacement of the centrality of philosophical Truth to practical "decision making that involves question and critique" ("Developing" 223). In terms of composition studies or writing research, I suggest this shift is likewise reflected as a shift from writing as a moral project (foundationalism) to writing as an ethical project (anti-foundationalism). It is writing as a moral project that is then operationalized in the sorting and shaping of the performance of propriety.

<center>The Moral Project of College Composition</center>

Robert J. Connors is a composition scholar of tradition and the archive whose engagement with ethics, while brief, is central to my understanding of the social and historical circumstances leading up to the ethical turn in the mid-1990s in composition studies. Connors' history of rhetoric and written composition in America after 1870,

Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy, suggests college writing began as a moral fiat against bad grammar. He writes: "Throughout most of its history as a college subject, English composition has meant one thing to most people: the single-minded enforcement of standards of mechanical and grammatical correctness in writing" (112). The "correctness" of one's language practices signaled moral rectitude – a certain adherence to or ability to perform language in accordance to one's station. Thus, at Harvard in 1874, "when the English faculty received" the results from their first-ever entrance exam requiring writing, they were "deeply shocked" with the sheer amount of "formal and mechanical errors" exhibited (128). The "illiteracy of American boys" drew public attention as an example of the decline, the moral decay, of social standards in American Colleges (128).

In the years leading up to this crisis point, writing instruction drew primarily upon the rhetorical tradition; it was "primarily Blairian: taxonomic, abstract and theoretical, concerned with style, taste, and systems of rules and principles rather than with creative methods" (Connors 126). But by 1870, "the idea of teaching grammatical or mechanical correctness on the college level" was beginning to take hold (Connors 125). The Harvard entrance exam is an important moment for writing ethics because two important ethical concerns arise from here: the moralization of grammar in a culture of correctness and the exploitation of writing instructor labor.

First, where schools might have once assumed a certain level of propriety on behalf of incoming students, the entrance exams suggested this was no longer the case. And this precipitates a crisis of sorts because social class is "most obviously reflected in a person's way of speaking," (Connors 124). Connors points out how the term *correct*

illustrates the moral shift of the time: "The very use of the word 'correct' changed between 1870 and 1910 from a meaning of 'socially acceptable' to one of 'formally acceptable'" (Connors 128). Thus, correctness becomes the measure of academic propriety and a pedagogical culture of correctness emerges, which in time, comes to emphasize formal correctness and form over content.

Connors suggests the emphasis on formal correctness is due in part to the need to reduce instructor workloads in responding to student writing. This, in turn, helps to drive the standardization of correctness tests for writing assessment, which then translated into classroom practices that emphasized form over idiosyncratic content. "What became more to be taught and enforced was correctness," writes Connors citing Albert Kitzhaber, and "the sort of correctness desired was superficial and mechanical" (Connors 128).

Thus, correctness and the need to routinize a measure of correctness are two normative values that gain the importance of moral fiat after the Harvard entrance exams of 1874. These values are very much with us today as, for example, current-traditional pedagogy and standardized writing examinations. Connors writes: "In a sense, the history of composition-rhetoric in America is a history of how this heretofore 'elementary' instruction took over a commanding place in most teacher's ideas of rhetoric" (127-28). Central to my own thoughts on teaching writing is the understanding that college writing has been for the past 150 years in America a moral project in socialization and normalization – a project founded on the transmission of morals. And if I can assume writing instruction is a moral project, regardless of my intentions, I have to ask the question: What morals am I teaching?

The A/moral Project of Writing Pedagogy

In 1997, two scholars aptly represent the tension between those who assume college instruction is unequivocally moral instruction and those who insist it is not and must remain amoral. In his editorial introduction to a 1997 issue of the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, Charles H. Sides surveys the effects of postmodern theory on the field, lamenting that there is, "no simple answer to what is right and what is wrong" anymore because "such concepts" are culturally and historically determined (1). For some, this state of affairs might presume a slide into moral relativism, but Sides suggests that little has actually changed because religious institutions and court systems, such as the Supreme Court, will continue to maintain "societal standards" (1).

As for the assumed contingent and indeterminate nature of truth, Sides aims to alleviate the concerns of his audience by turning toward ethics, which he reminds his readers is concerned with questions beyond the "ever-shifting nature of right and wrong" (1). Ethics, Sides recalls "originated around Socrates" and his "search for the ultimate goal or end for human life": *Eudaimonia* (ευδαιμονια) – happiness that results from living well. In recognition that we have not "come much closer to understanding just what an ethics of technical communication is or ought to be," Sides suggest his readers consider *phroneisis* (φρονησισ), practical wisdom, a term central to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which supports *eudaimonia* through practical judgment that extends "beyond cultural norms of morality to a broader concept of 'the good'" (Sides 2, 1). Thus, in recognition of the erosion of transcendental moral codes – codes central to the proper execution of technical communication, Sides offers local, practical wisdom.

The same year that Sides offers *phroneisis* as a moral grounding for writing pedagogy (1997), John Mearsheimer, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, presents to incoming students his case for the amoral project of education. Mearsheimer equates teaching truth (including moral truth) with teaching answers (149). Rather than teach answers, Mearsheimer espouses pedagogies that seek to instill a set of professional practices and mental habits, such as skepticism or intellectual curiosity. Morality is, Mearshimer states in no uncertain terms, a non-aim of education. "Not only is there a powerful imperative at Chicago to stay away from teaching the truth," Mearsheimer states, "but the University also makes little effort to provide you with moral guidance. Indeed, it is a remarkably amoral institution" (149). Mearsheimer here represents the traditional Platonic ideal of Truth as prior to ethical or rhetorical representations. This amoral ideal for pedagogy which Mearsheimer raises has endured, and perhaps, I might argue provides in miniature an exigence for the project at hand.

Rhetorical Ethics and Internet Writing

In 1998, Porter delivers a landmark monograph for ethics and writing pedagogy, *Rhetorical Ethics and Internetworked Writing*, addressing "the ethical complexities" of writing on the Internet (*Rhetorical Ethics* xii). Of interest to Porter is "how we are to treat one another" as we transition to online and internetworked writing (xi). At a pedagogical register, Porter delivers a "procedural heuristic" intended to "assist the rhetorical ethical *process*" – to "help writers and writing teachers in the act(s) of producing discourse" (*Rhetorical Ethics* 150). Porter links ethics to rhetoric as two modes of discourse interested in action – "action in the sense that it establishes a relationship with an

assumed audience and pushes forward a 'should,' a picture of how things ought to be for 'us'" (Porter, *Rhetorical Ethics* xiv).

At another register, Porter's reading of traditional ethics through postmodern theory provides the contours of a localized rhetoric where the "situated moment and the particular details and circumstances of that setting (the 'facts,' values, audiences, timing, historical circumstances, technologies) are critical" (*Rhetorical Ethics*158–9). Porter's heuristic, then, presumes the interdependent nature of ethics and rhetoric, a move consistent with the tradition of rhetorical pedagogy since Plato, but through his engagement with postmodern theory, he presents postmodern ethics as rhetorical, indeterminate, situated, and central to the rhetorical acts constituting knowledge.

I read this move to conjoin rhetoric and ethics as central to Porter's effort to articulate a social-epistemic rhetoric that is just. For example, Porter defines rhetoric as "the art of constructing discourse" (*Rhetorical Ethics* xiii). Taking discourse on the terms of Foucault's historical critique, discourse includes textual and verbal elements of language, but also material culture and all forms of signification, meaning making, and knowledge production (cf. Foucault *Archeology* 7; Veyne 89). Connecting the ends of this syllogisms, then, Porter's rhetoric is the art of constructing knowledge. But such a rhetoric would be unthinkable if it were not morally limited (cf. Katz). This limit for Porter, I suggest, is ethics – an ethics situated inside of rhetoric and writing pedagogy. Porter writes: "My position is that all acts of writing are ethical insofar as (a) they aim at some kind of change, presumably for 'the good' (or the better); and (b) they presuppose roles for, and relations between, writers and readers" (*Rhetorical Ethics* 20). In short, rhetorical ethics for Porter is judgment exercised at the point of the rhetorical constitution

of knowledge. This recalls Aristotle's rhetoric as a "faculty" for "discovering the available means for persuasion," (Kinneavy and Eskin 434). And probably not unlike Aristotle, Porter would insist the most persuasive means are ethical.

Ethics for Aristotle was the everyday wisdom exercised for one's well-being. Porter is not far off: "Rhetorical ethics, as I define it, has to do with questions about human relations as they are constructed and maintained through acts of discourse" (*Rhetorical Ethics* xiv). Discourse and relations are key words indicating Porter's social constructivist grounding, but more central here is Porter's centering of ethics in his internetworked writing pedagogy. He is responding here to one of the most pressing questions of the moment: How does the Internet challenge writing pedagogy? And his book emerges against a backdrop of growing excitement about synchronous, internetworked writing beyond the physical and closed spaces of classrooms. One central concern for Porter's readers of the time might have been how to implement new writing technologies into classrooms. Thus, Porter places his emphasis on application; however, he provides a thoughtful and compelling vision of postmodern ethics for the internetworked writing classroom:

> Most ethical systems and approaches assume or arise from a print paradigm. My position is that problems are best worked out in terms of a situated and kairotic rhetorical ethics, which grants ethical authority to local practice and the conventions of particular communities, which accounts for the specific technological nature of the electronic medium, and which invokes a discourse ethic that is essentially pluralistic in its constitution and heuristic and rhetorical in its methodology. (19)

Here we see plainly how ethics figures into Porter's pedagogy. His constructionist assumptions privilege the local, situated context as the point of action and meaning-making (knowledge production). Internetworked writing technologies complicate the rhetorical situation in a number of ways that, at the time Porter writes, were just becoming apparent. As a writing scholar whose pedagogy is vested in social-epistemic rhetoric, Porter seeks in postmodern ethics a methodology for communication practices that might guard against a backslide into moral relativism.

His response to moral relativism offers his readers a glimpse of a pluralist, rhetorical ethics integrated into writing pedagogy focused on the critical analysis of public discourse. But perhaps, most important for Porter's audience is his emphasis on application and casuistry, which he loosely describes as "guidance in the form of some general principles (respect for audience being one) as well as in the form of procedural strategies" (*Rhetorical Ethics* xiii). While casuistry is traditionally associated with specious reasoning and sophistry, many scholars close to tradition have remade casuistry into a pedagogical strategy for overcoming the loss of transcendental values assumed by advocates of postmodern theory.

<div align="center">Character Ethics</div>

Another remaking of the specious use of casuistry arrives from the direction of literature when, in 1998, Wayne C. Booth makes a case for the "world of story" as a resource to support students becoming active and critical readers. To be sure, this is an argument I would expect to hear from a literature professor, but of interest here is Booth's explicit centering of morality in his reading and writing pedagogy. "It is in stories," Booth suggests, "in narratives large and small rather than in coded commandments, that

students absorb lessons in how to confront ethical complexity" ("The Ethics" 48). Stories,

for Booth, provide students opportunities to safely confront difficult moral questions as

"'virtual' cases that echo the cases" they will meet when they "return to the more

disorderly, 'actual' world" ("The Ethics" 48). Casuistry in Booth's hands becomes the

practice of discussing the moral dilemmas students confront when reading literature.

For Booth, as his students confront "ethical complexity" through the close

encounter with difficult moral problems portrayed in stories, and with the right guidance,

they begin constructing themselves as "persons with a genuinely admirable, or 'useful,'

ethical center" ("The Ethics" 43). Thus, by thinking through difficult stories, Booth

believes readers might improve upon their characters in some capacity – becoming more

wise, skilled, resourceful – through the accumulation of "virtual" experience that mimics

"actual" experience.

Again, this is not an unexpected perspective; nonetheless, what I want to point out

is Booth's explicit focus on the personal (character) in contrast with Porter's emphasis,

which is plainly social-epistemic. Where Porter situates his rhetorical ethics in the social-

political arena of public discourse, Booth places a more quiet emphasis on a person

reading a story. On my view, we should not automatically assume that an ethical

emphasis on developing character means Booth prioritizes the individual over the social;

rather, Booth is implicitly forwarding a pedagogical practice that looks to ethics to

prepare individuals to confront social injustice – to confront "ethical complexities" – to

help "students create selves most useful to them-useful not just in the utilitarian sense but

in the sense of yielding an ultimately rewarding life, working for an ultimately rewarding

and defensible society" ("The Ethics" 45). In the end, Booth is working toward a writing

and reading ethics that contributes to an individual living the best life possible, whereas Porter seems to assume that for this to happen, public discourse must first strike an ethical tone.

For Booth, the interconnectedness of ethics, reading, and writing means that "English teachers, if they teach stories ethically, are more important to society than even the best teachers of Latin or calculus or history" ("The Ethics" 48). Stories, it seems, when they are messy and complicated, undo universal, rule-based systems associated with textbooks, forcing students to confront the messiness of the situated and indeterminate nature of real-life decisions. Thus, for Booth, reading literature through ethics helps him to "produce" students with better characters and this, in turn, will lead to a more just society. Booth writes:

> Regardless of our institutional base or theoretical differences, we all ought to share this loose-jointed but essential goal: to produce this kind of person, self, character, not that kind, even as we acknowledge that any one picture of "the best kind" always needs improving. It is in engaging with stories that "pictures" of life get improved. ("The Ethics" 54)

Booth's focus on character parallels a trajectory Bizzell initially stakes out in her discussion of virtue, but Booth's emphasis of casuistry and the literary canon expands our understanding of how a writing ethics focused on the person might actually play out in a writing classroom. As Booth neatly summarizes his reformulation of moral casuistry for reading and writing pedagogy, "literature teaches effective casuistry: the counterbalancing of 'cases'" ("The Ethics" 48).

The following year (1999), Don Bialostosky contributes an essay to the *Rhetoric Review,* which examines the tension between Porter's social-epistemic rhetoric and Booth's focus on personal character. Bialostosky describes this tension as "the opposition between undisciplined life and disciplinary art (and science)" (22). Bialostosky constructs a framework drawing on early and late work of Mikhail Bakhtin (b. 1895) to demonstrate "a fundamental opposition that composition studies repeatedly acts out," an "opposition in which heroic liberated subjectivity," set "against academic disciplinary authority" (22). The example Bialostosky holds up is the well-known debate between Peter Elbow championing the subject (cf. Elbow, "Being"; *Writing*) and David Bartholomae emphasizing social construction manifest in the university (cf. Bartholomae, *Inventing*; "Writing").

Bialostosky frames the issue through Bartholomae: "Students write in a space defined by all the writing that has preceded them, writing the academy insistently draws together: in the library, in the reading list, in the curriculum"; "and yet, it is obvious that there are many classrooms where students are asked to imagine that they can clear out a space to write on their own, to express their own thoughts and ideas, not to reproduce those of others" (qtd. in Bialostosky 22). Thus, Bialostosky highlights, for the purposes of this discussion, the tension between received moral codes (I am thinking of this specifically in terms of Connors' discussion of grammar) which challenge student self-determination. The questions around students' rights to their own language, a well-known discussion in composition scholarship, is a quick example of how this tension might play out in writing classrooms. Bialostosky raises visibility to the very important question of self-determination to writing ethics.

Both Porter and Booth talk to self-determination, which I simplify here to *agency*. Ethical agency, for Porter, is exercised through judgment and for Booth, critical reading. Both scholars imagine ethics as action – rhetorical action, answering: What is the best action/choice? Furthermore, both prioritize the situated, rhetorical context over normative moral codes. Porter emphasizes system with his version of casuistry and hermeneutic method, and Booth also emphasizes casuistry, but places his emphasis on character development – the reader's character. Ethical arguments of character bring to my mind the Civil Rights movement and its leaders, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, among many others. The extraordinary quality of the people who risked their own persons in acts of civil disobedience arises in part from their characters, and specifically, the care they took in shaping and maintaining their character. How, then, might writing construct or enact character? How might character be a method of resistance? How might the personal become political? Feminist historiography can help here – and the suggestion is, interestingly, virtue.

In a pair of essays published in 1999, Kristen Kennedy posits a feminist-version of virtue ethics as a "Cynic ethics and tactics of resistance" which seeks to make the personal political ("Hipparchia" 53). The Cynics connect the personal to the political sphere through a "philosophy of action rather than introspection," with the imperative "that virtue must be practiced," which in the case of the Cynics, is a virtue practiced in defiance of "community standards of decorum," ("Hipparchia" 48). Principle among the Cynics, for Kennedy, is Hipparchia of Maronia, a female Cynic philosopher who flourished around 300 BCE in Athens. Kennedy writes:

Hipparchia disrupted the conventions of the public sphere by taking her private

life to the streets, whether that disruption came in the form of bathing, speaking,

or having sex. Cynic ethics, then, are joined to a public, discursive, and bodily

performance of those ethics, but a performance that, until Hipparchia, had not

included women. Hipparchia offered a challenge by equating ethics and politics in

the subversive rejection of the private and public spheres as discrete spaces.

("Hipparchia" 51)

A central Cynic virtue Hipparchia practices is *parrhêsia* – fearless speech.

Kennedy explains: "Positioned on the outskirts of culture, the Cynic *parrhêsiast* – one

who speaks openly and at great risk – creates the space to speak out" ("Cynic Rhetoric"

27). Hipparchia rejects a private life which represents the "appropriate" space for a

female foreigner – and would reduce her to little more than property without rights in

Hellenic Athens. Thus, denied (or rejecting) a voice within the *polis*, Hipparchia the

Cynic embodies the "ethical and rhetorical imperative to find a space on the 'outside' of

the *polis* and speak out (of turn)" ("Cynic Rhetoric" 27). By "outside of the *polis*," I

believe Kennedy's reference is socio-political, and specifically, I think Kennedy is

describing a moral virtue as a politics of personal resistance.

What might this look like in a writing classroom? Certainly, most Cynic tactics

are inappropriate for the contemporary classroom, but how might students open spaces

outside the polis (as classroom, as university, as professional discourse) to "speak out (of

turn)?" And do I want them to do this? I am thinking of Spigelman's concern that by

encouraging fearless speech, writing instructors may find they invite into their classrooms

"viewpoints that they find morally offensive" (327). But Kennedy suggests that writing

pedagogy might employ virtue ethics or care for one's character to raise dissensus as a kairotic opening which is intended to open a political space where those marginalized and underrepresented voices might be heard, and further, where the unsayable might be openly said. Kennedy explains:

> Cynic rhetoric stages kairotic moments when dissensus, rather than consensus, becomes the goal of the speaker in imploring an audience to self-scrutiny and action. The implications of this counterstatement rhetorical tradition are evident in the simple fact that little is known – or left – of the Cynics, unless we look to the ways in which incivility and interruption are and have become an effective discursive means to an ethical or political end. Therefore, to understand the Cynics' significance, we need to suspend our support for a rhetoric of reason and decorum and lend an ear to the rhetorical possibilities of noise. ("Cynic Rhetoric" 26)

Here, Kennedy poses the question of virtue in relation to consensus, or what Katz might term *groupthink*. In a well-known essay, Greg Meyers was an early scholar to critique consensus in his discussion of Kenneth Bruffee's scholarship on collaboration, and in doing so, provides a sketch of some of the concerns consensus pose writing pedagogy (see Meyers; cf. Bruffee). In short, Meyers takes issue with scholarship emphasizing consensus as a social strategy. For Meyers, consensus signals an exclusionary tactic disguised as a democratic operation, which ultimately, reduces difference in favor of the same. Consensus suggests that dissenting and fringe voices have been omitted – conflict has been suppressed – in favor of a united front. In place of consensus, and similar to Kennedy and the Cynics, Meyers forwards dissensus as a

necessary political step individuals must risk to challenge the moral/social status quo: "Conflict is part of the system, and is necessary to change the system, then consensus, within the system as it is, must mean that some interests have been suppressed or excluded" (Meyers 156; cf. Bernard-Donals, "Against Publics"). Thus, Meyers helps me to understand Kennedy's raising of dissensus as ethical action. One must inhabit a position outside the *polis* (collective, group) to voice a perspective that has been omitted through consensus. This is the default position of all non-citizens of the *polis*, so the real question is how does one make themselves heard from outside the *polis*, or from the social margins? For Kennedy, the Cynic tactics of shock, diatribe, and *parrhêsia,* delivered kairotically, increase the chance of being heard.

Thus, as a feminist scholar working toward an ethics of difference, Kennedy figures the Cynic's use of dissensus as the fertile ground of political change, and *parrhêsia* as an ethical critique, serving the ethical imperative to shock the morally complacent who "had fallen under the spell of false gods and had shirked the virtues of a democratic polis for the comfort of easy wealth" ("Hipparchia" 53). In this sense, Kennedy offers a complementary response to Booth's project by expanding the personal – through the ethical imperative – into the realm of the political.

<div align="center">Moral Language</div>

While resistance and dissensus may be a necessary strategy for marginal voices who wish to lift the personal to the level of public, they are not the only tactics available to writing pedagogy in terms of moral or ethical critique. Phillip Sipiora, commemorating the career of James L. Kinneavy shortly after his death, highlights a contrasting position to Booth and Kennedy, which Kinneavy developed after his scholarship, beginning in

1941, turned "exclusively" about the subject of "ethics" (Sipiora 541). Sipiora suggests "Kinneavy's emphasis on the social aspects of ethics reminds us that moral philosophy is far too important to be left to philosophers" (542). And further, it is too important to leave it to individuals to sort out. Instead, Kinneavy "recalls the rhetorical *paideia* of Isocrates" necessarily "locating ethics (or morals) in the realm of the social" (Sipiora 541). Kinneavy, then, falls closer to Porter's social-epistemic position than positions that emphasize individual virtue or character. Sipiora describes Kinneavy's ethics:

> This vision – a social ethics – is the classical view of morality. Since the seventeenth century, [a competing perspective has emerged] in which morality becomes a matter of individual choice and in which there are no universal principles and no teleological view of human nature that determine the purpose, goals, or *telos* to which an individual should aspire. Each individual is an ethical agent unto him- or herself. Kinneavy condemns such a view because it is necessarily selfish and anti-social. (542)

Here it should be clear that Sipiora has omitted virtue as a possible *telos* for which an individual might aspire, because as Kennedy demonstrates, personal virtue can lead to political action. And further, pedagogies grounded in Kinneavy's social ethics, which aims to stand in for the "classical view of morality" and "universal principles," provides a current example of an older model that for many feminist scholars advocating for difference or dissensus ethics would recognize as discredited. But Sipiora reminds his readers that "Kinneavy was well aware of the difficulties and dangers of positing a theory of 'universal' ethics," but at the same time, he felt that what writing classrooms needed was not dissensus but "a general language of morality," to facilitate class discussions

"with students from diverse backgrounds and different moral codes, in short, 'an ethical

lingua franca,' which "allows the teacher to speak to each group with the same language"

(544).[2]

Kinneavy works toward a "general language of morality" or an "ethical *lingua*

franca" for the writing classroom. Kinneavy poses the problem of morality in translation,

and he proposes a common vocabulary, where Porter looks to hermeneutics. For Booth

and Kennedy, a common vocabulary may facilitate the discussion within the *polis*, but

offers little to marginalized and silenced voices outside the polis. Thus, Kinneavy's

insistence on the "universal" vexes his project, and while Sipiora mentions Kinneavy's

opposition to moral relativism, he does not develop ethical pluralism, which appears to

me to better describe the grounding for Kinneavy's moral project – to transcribe pluralist

moral values into a common set of terms.

It is this image of pluralist ethics that Kinneavy implicitly affirms in the landmark

collection for ethics in composition scholarship, *Ethical Issues in College Writing*,

published in 1999, the year of his death. In an essay included in this collection, Kinneavy

hits upon the very concern that brought me originally to this project: "Many of us in

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[2] In an interview with Gary Olson and Lynn Worsham in 2000, Judith Butler talks to the possibility of such a project: "Every classroom I've ever been in is a hermeneutic problem. It's not as if there's a 'common' language. I suppose if I were to speak in the language of the television commercial, I might get a kind of uniform recognition – at least for a brief moment – but I'm not going to be able to presuppose a common language in my classroom. […] What does it mean to say that there is a language that is common, that everyone understands, and that it is somehow our social responsibility to speak? It seems to me that our social responsibility is to become attuned to the fact that there is no common language anymore. Or if there is a common language, it is the language of a commercialism that seeks to extend the hegemony of commercial American English, and to do it in a way that violently effaces the problem of multilingualism. This is one of the most profound pedagogical problems of our time, if not one of the most profound political problems of our time" (qtd. in Olson and Worsham 735-6).

rhetoric have been explicitly concerned with the dangers of the techniques of our own discipline" ("Ethics and Rhetoric" 1). In confronting the "danger" of amoral rhetoric, Kinneavy begins his project in moral education, and by 1983, he establishes a new ethics-focused English course required of all incoming students at the University of Texas – Austin (Sipiora 542). As Kinneavy originally began bringing moral issues into his writing classes, he became increasingly aware that "students did not have the language and conceptual skills to write about moral issues (2). Faced with moral heteroglossia and rejecting the amoral approach to education espoused by many educators (see Mearsheimer), Kinneavy sought instead to create a writing classroom with a "moral system and a common language in which to discuss these matters" (Kinneavy "Ethics and Rhetoric" 19).

Kinneavy's moral project presents an important challenge to writing pedagogy: to "teach students at all ages and in all disciplines a respect for life, for family, for property, and for truth" (19). Importantly, Kinneavy insists we *can* teach writing and rhetoric "in a non-doctrinaire way" that supports moral education "without imposing a given ideology on [students]" (19). Kinneavy counters James Berlin by assuming a certain neutrality. This is in composition scholarship a problematic position – well before the time of this essay because of Berlin's persuasive claims that pedagogy is never uninterested because it is "always already serving certain ideological claims" (477). The question, then, lies in the assumed difference between being interpolated by ideology and behaving morally? This is a question I will take up further in Chapter 3. Here, I want to suggest that while I am not likely to presume ideological or moral neutrality, I find Kinneavy's "moral system and a common language," useful in thinking about the kinds of support and preparation

students might require before reflecting upon or critiquing the moral presumptions of ideological claims or the ideological presuppositions of moral codes (Kinneavy 19).

<div align="center">The Ethico-Political Subject</div>

David Bleich's Foreword to *Ethical Issues in College Writing* – a collection in which Kinneavy argues for a common moral vocabulary – offers a periscope view of the social, political, and moral landscape at the cusp of the new millennium. Bleich suggests that "after a long drink of identity politics and social construction," composition scholars have begun again to reconsider "individual subjectivity in the context of the social and political awareness painfully established in our curricula" (ix). Bleich quips at the curricular influence of popular multicultural movements which tended to essentialize (and thus reduce) difference and those strains of postmodern theory that tended to overplay social determination. In response to these political and social foci, Bleich offers the subject, or at least, seems to indicate that the way through the impasse of social determination is through the subject. He continues: "Essays in this volume are struggling with this transition toward an ethical style of speaking and writing that preserves the habits of speaking about real people in living situations, without rendering these people as 'Other' and without feeling obliged to declare artificial solidarities with them" (xvi). In other words, Bleich inhabits a position somewhere between Porter and Booth, or Kinneavy and Kennedy, by taking up ethical and political questions in terms of subjectivity.

Later in the same collection that Bleich introduces, Kathleen Ethel Welch contradicts Kinneavy's assumption of the possibility of pedagogical neutrality, asserting that "all writing practices, including writing pedagogy, involve the transmission of value

systems" (Welch 137). Value systems undergird moral systems – indicating the desired effects and implied limits of moral codes or systems. As such, describing and critiquing various values and systems of values would be of central interest to Kinneavy's program to articulate a general moral language with which to transcribe our local, moral idiom into a common *lingua franca*. Welch stakes a position somewhere between Kinneavy and Berlin, writing, "all writing practices are embedded in ideology" – a position very close to Porter's rhetorical ethics (Welch 137). Of interest here, Welch suggest moral "values" are located within, and thus determined by, ideology. That is, morality is hegemonic in that it reinforces and reifies the moral presuppositions and normative ideals of abstract groups, and not specific individuals. Thus, non-conformance to social norms identifies an individual as dissenting, or embodying values not valued within the *polis*. Ultimately, then, Welch links ethics to politics as the site of political and rhetorical action situated in the individual who complies with or resists moral authority to their own benefit or detriment.

Of concern for Welch are writing pedagogies and administrators, that decontextualize writing by divorcing "writing pedagogy from ethics" (Welch 137; cf. Mearsheimer). For Welch, pedagogies that position themselves as amoral are, regardless of their intentions, teaching morality. Because all writing arises within pre-existing moral and ideological constraints, Welch considers all writing, and for that matter, all language practices, "inherently ethics-laden and inherently rhetorical," and therefore, all "writing programs and teachers are in fact teaching ethics" (137). Welch surfaces a certain opacity which has prevented composition scholar-teachers from fully accounting for the degree which their pedagogies and praxis are implicated in the "transmission of value systems,"

and as a result, "they are teaching ethics badly" (137). Like Kinneavy, Welch recognizes the ubiquity of moral values in the writing classroom, and rather than let these presumptions rest, she insists pedagogies must begin interrogating them. For Kinneavy, this is done through a common moral vocabulary, for Welch, ideological critique.

In an essay included in *The Ethics of Writing Instruction: Issues in Theory and Practice,* William H. Thelin provides a complementary perspective to some of the scholarship covered thus far. In his essay, Thelin tries to "clarify the disputes over politicized pedagogies" with the expressed intention of proposing "a teaching method where politics can be fit comfortably in the writing classroom" (36). Thus, where Welch leaves the connection between ethics and politics implied, Thelin takes it up explicitly. This strategy relays Thelin's debt to Berlin's notion of ideology in the classroom. Thelin figures writing classrooms as sites where competing "ideological, discursive, and social" forces vie for dominance (41). Politics, for Thelin, represents the possibility of negotiation among competing interests. Moreover, the political process is itself a meaning-making endeavor as participants determine "what constitutes knowledge and power" (Thelin 41). Thus, Thelin espouses an epistemic rhetoric grounded in political action in contrast to Porter's, which is grounded in ethical action. Thelin's turn toward the political process as shaper of a more just classroom culture leaves writing ethics undeveloped (in contrast to Porter). In the end, Thelin's argument for writing ethics is arguably reducible to a recommendation that instructors construct "limits" that preclude "objectivity," since such an assumption "acts as a filter for dominant ideology to maintain its prevalence in the classroom" (41). Thelin's argument, in one sense, is for a teacherly ethos which precludes claims of transparency.

Ethics as Character and Habit

A cornerstone concept of the pedagogical tradition of rhetoric closely associated

with morality and ethics is *ethos. Ethos* is one of Aristotle's three artistic proofs (*pisteis)*

– what he referred to as the available means of persuasion available to speech – generally

translated from the Greek as "habit" or "custom," and commonly thought of as a

speaker's credibility in a given rhetorical situation. As Porter explains, "the connection

between ethics (ἔθος) as moral habit and ethos (ἤθος) as moral character are linguistically

close, sharing the same stem in Greek. Who you are and what you do, ethically speaking,

are very close, although not precisely the same" (*Rhetorical Ethics* 37). Continuing with

Porter, "ethos refers to the need for rhetors to portray themselves in their speeches as

having a good moral character, 'practical wisdom,' and a concern for the audience in

order to achieve credibility and thereby secure persuasion" (Cherry qtd. in Porter,

Rhetorical Ethics 37). On the surface, then, it appears that the rhetorical tradition

provides a clear link to ethics and morality, but as is often the case for terms and concepts

transported from their original historical-cultural setting, there are many complexities in

the translation.

Writing in 2000, Deborah H. Holdstein, challenges Michael Berhard-Donals'

deployment of the seemingly innocuous term *ethos* in reference to testimonies of the

Shoah (a term preferred over "Holocaust" for etymological reasons). Holdstein is

troubled by the irony of using a Greek term to explore a decidedly Jewish and Hebrew

experience – an irony perhaps deepened into paradox when we learn the Jews of the time

defined themselves, in part, as anti-Hellenic ("The Ironies" 944). However, Holdstein

concedes, while there are many terms in Hebrew denoting a long and rich tradition of

Jewish engagement of moral questions, there is not a single Hebrew counterpart for the Greek *ethos* – rather, there are a set of terms corresponding to what rhetors roll-up under the single term *ethos* ("The Ironies" 944).

I want to dwell here for a moment to consider Holdstein's reaction to the measured and well-argued use of it by Bernard-Donals. For me, this moment illustrates what I consider to be a central ethical concern of composition scholarship responding to contemporary issues by drawing from tradition and canon: the potential for ahistorical and irresponsible transcultural applications. Bernard-Donals explains how ethos represents the point of investigation:

The ethos of these speakers [those who witnesses the atrocities of the Shoah] goes without saying: the language of the testimony and the events that lie behind it are so unimpeachable, and so horrifying, as to render the character of those who survived the crucible eminently sound. But what happens when, for one reason or another, the ethos of the witness is called into question? ("Ethos" 565)

Here, Bernard-Donals ponders the limits of ethos as "good moral character" when the witnesses of unthinkable moral atrocities testify (cf. Porter, *Rhetorical* 37). For Bernard-Donals, it is a question that seeks to probe the boundaries of Lyotard's concept of the differend – the incommensurability of competing truth statements. For Holdstein, *ethos* is "a term that bears the connotative weight of morality and personal responsibility," which "takes on a vexed, charged context and meaning once juxtaposed with Judaism or the Jewish people" (Holdstein, "The Ironies" 943).[3]

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[3] Here it is worth considering the argument for an "ethics of *ethos*" raised by James S. Baumlin, George H. Jenson, and Lance Massey in the landmark collection, *Ethical Issues in College Writing*. The authors write: "What are the ethical implications of repressing *ad hominem* argument in academic discourse (which includes the teaching of writing)? Can

Further, Holdstein contests any presumption of ideological neutrality of the terms and concepts of the rhetorical tradition, much less the tradition itself, because "the great minds of the rhetorical tradition brought to it their own problematic *ethos* or lack of it – with limitations, prejudices, and ideological purposes" ("The Ironies" 948). Holdstein suggests that even "at the origins of rhetoric (even in Cicero's work), there is a hatred and a politics of exclusion that troubles 'our' rhetorical tradition" ("The Ironies" 948). Given this history, Holdstein questions the appropriateness of *ethos* to Shoah testimonies given the documented anti-semitism prevalent in literature of the Hellenic and Roman periods ("The Ironies" 942–3). In sum, Holdstein demonstrates how even the very ground upon which I stand as a composition scholar is vested with ideological, historical, and cultural significance. Holdstein's critique, for me, highlights the dangers of pre-critical transcultural and transhistorical applications of the terms and concepts of rhetorical tradition – even descriptive, analytic ones – and as such, represents a landmark argument specific to ethics and morality in composition scholarship in proximity to tradition and canon.

<div align="center">Ethical Literacy</div>

An alternative approach to conflicted senses of traditional terms, such as *ethos*, might be to omit the term, or introduce new ways of speaking about it. Daniel F. Collins and Robert C. Sutton, writing in the context of two-year colleges in 2001, raise ethics in their essay specifically in an effort to bind it to rhetoric. While their discussion places this connection at the site of student writing, and implicitly, as an issue of character, they do

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we develop an ethics of discourse that acknowledges the person "behind" an argument, addressing the person as if he or she remained part of the argument itself? Can we, in short, develop an ethics of *ethos*?" (184).

not use the term *ethos* anywhere, which in this case seems like a lost opportunity. The authors ask: "Is it possible to create the conditions wherein students begin to see rhetoric and ethics as intertwined?" (44). This is an important question when we consider the image of rhetoric the authors are working from, which they borrow from John Poulakos, an image of ethics and rhetoric as coextensive in that rhetoric seeks to "capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate," and ethics then "suggests that which is possible" (qtd. in Collins and Sutton 45).

Of interest to this discussion, Collins and Sutton appear to take up an ethical question similar to the one that brought me here, which I rephrase: Is it possible to practice writing that leads to the good life? Specifically, for the authors, the implied question is whether it might be possible to practice everyday writing that helps writers make better choices that lead to better outcomes. Starting from an image of ethics borrowed from Porter: "Ethics is not offered as an answer, a set of rules governing conduct, but as a process of inquiry into any determination of right and wrong," Collins and Sutton forward virtue (though they do not refer to it specifically as a virtue) – the virtue of commitment (qtd. in Collins and Sutton 46). The authors suggest that better outcomes are the result of a certain "commitment" to the exercise of rhetoric and ethics – a "commitment to a position, to settle conflicts and build community, to negotiate differences" (Collins and Sutton 46). To be sure, focusing on "commitment" risks the critique of efficacy, but more central to this discussion is the authors' linking of literacy and ethics, which they have left for me to call ethical literacy. The authors write: "If literacy is one's relationship to the world, as Paulo Freire consistently argued," then student perspectives might be "enriched with the ethical theories they find valuable"

(Collins and Sutton 53). This recalls, for me, both Kinneavy and Booth's projects, which I think would benefit from a closer association with literacy in composition scholarship.

The point I want to draw out here is the authors' linking writing/reading (as literacy) to the quality of the experience (through an enriched perspective) of being in the world. They achieve this enriched perspective by centering "ethics as a framework from which to examine locally significant issues" in their classrooms (Collins and Sutton 53). This position, though it is largely left implied and the authors are apparently reluctant to draw terminology from the rhetorical tradition from which it is grounded, represents, I believe, an early recognition of the potential for ethical literacies.

Candace Spigelman, writing in the same year (2001), presents a contrasting position, questioning the value of teaching "ethical responsibility in the first-year composition course" (321). Spigelman's question is prompted in part by teaching practices grounded in postmodern theory which frame the writing classroom as a "contact zone" and aim at instilling a sense of responsibility to others in these spaces (cf. Friend, "Ethics"; Cooper, "Postmodern"; see also Pratt; Miller). What happens, asks Spigelman, when students cross moral lines? For example, when students practice fearless speech? And when they (inevitably) do, "what is our ethical response to student writing that espouses racism, ethnocentrism, gender bias, or other forms of intolerance?" (Spigelman 321). Spigelman's response is to criticize writing pedagogies that share a "postmodern reluctance to confront directly the rhetorics of intolerance, understood as individual world views or competing ideological positions" (322). This is, on my reading, a hasty generalization in that I don't see Spigelman's desire to confront immoral behavior in the classroom as that much different than, for example, Christy Friend's; desire to create

"productive conflict" in the classroom. However, unlike Friend, Spigelman wishes to avoid these moral transgressions altogether

At the root of Spigelman's argument is an understanding that writing instruction is always implicated in ideology and the transmission of values (cf. Berlin; Welch). Spigelman laments that writing pedagogies grounded in postmodern theory "provide instruction in virtue without promoting a single established code of principles or values," teaching instead the "interrogation of all values" (325). For Spigelman, such an amoral climate begs the question of what ideologies and moralities are, in fact, being transmitted under the guise of neutrality. In contrast, Spigelman holds up the rhetorical tradition pedagogies that espouse character building and virtue, where educators like Isocrates taught that "the power to speak well" was coupled with the power to "think right" and that rhetorical study fostered the "love of wisdom and love of honour" (qtd. in Spigelman 322). And further, in classrooms without a moral center where all values are challengeable, Spigelman raises an ethical dilemma many writing teachers would identify with:

> If, on the one hand, writing teachers advocate an egalitarian perspective, they will end up promoting particular principles, despite their denials to the contrary. If, on the other hand, pluralistic values are genuinely encouraged, teachers may discover that they have invited into their classrooms the expression of viewpoints that they find morally offensive. (327)

At stake, for Spigelman, is a writing pedagogy that manifests a safe space and stable moral values shielded from moral relativism and ethical pluralism. In this sense, Spigelman represents a reaction to the perceived effects of postmodern theory, and

especially, ethical systems constructed on postmodern theory. I don't want to suggest this is a naive position; Spigelman clearly recognizes writing classes to be "complicated and always indeterminate," as well as "the contingency of all systems of value" (327). But in place of an "interrogation of all values," she offers a "less confrontational approach based on Deweyan principles of cooperative inquiry" where "the instructor provides opportunities for examining various viewpoints and raising doubt, but students are responsible for sharing ideas and for motivating change in themselves and their peers" (325, 327). This shift of responsibility from the student to the instructor offers, for Spigelman, a way to facilitate classroom discussions within the parameters of moral limits; however, by satisfying her need for safe space, her pedagogy may violate the spirit of the pedagogies her essay is prompted by. This will become much clearer in Chapter 3 when I take up the work of Friend and Cooper.

The Rhetoric of Ethics

In 2004, Booth delivers a monograph, *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, in which he asserts that "the quality of our lives, especially the ethical and communal quality, depends to an astonishing degree on the quality of our rhetoric" (*The Rhetoric* xii). Booth now appears much more Aristotelian by linking ethics to the "quality" of life and community. By prioritizing rhetoric over ethics, he stakes a position complementary to Porter's epistemological project of rhetorical ethics – a position reinforced by Teresa Henning in an CCCC presentation the following year when she takes up contrary assumptions.

Henning's 2005 CCCC presentation expands the discussion here to include Enlightenment senses of morality and ethics. In particular, Henning takes up Immanuel Kant's version of deontological ethics – an ethics grounded in the primacy of reason in

determining one's moral duty. The issue Henning takes with deontological ethics, which she defines as, "adherence to one universal rule which is used to generate moral codes" is that such systems impose "ethical rhetorics" (Henning 5). The problem with ethical rhetorics is they presuppose "what is good, right, or of value […] prior to any rhetorical discussion or inquiry" and irrespective of "contextual constraints" (5). The prevalence of ethical rhetorics, on Henning's terms, has turned ethics into a set of abstract statements without a local context or accountability – systems displacing the local, rhetorical contexts and value systems, in effect, precluding "these values from discussion" (5).

Ethical rhetorics are, for Henning, antithetical to a notion of ethical analysis as critique of the moral presumptions undergirding any given claim. In contradistinction, Henning argues for the priority of rhetoric – that is, rhetorical ethics. This returns us to the question which serves as the impetus of this chapter. What is the relationship of rhetoric to truth? But, perhaps, the manner in which I frame this question sets-up rhetoric in opposition with philosophy. For me, this signals a debt to rationality *a la* Plato and Descartes, which most postmodern theory contests. And it is around this point in the composition scholarship grounded in tradition that scholars begin expanding notions of writing ethics beyond the binary oppositions. Two such scholars I want to bring in here are Laura Micciche – particularly her advocacy of emotion and difference, and Kristie Fleckenstein, who examines boundary confusion and Internet identity.

In her 2005 article, "Emotion, Ethics, and Rhetorical Action," Micciche points to "recent work" in composition scholarship but laments that "attention to ethics in the field has foregrounded rhetorical issues, but this emphasis has not included pathos as a component of ethical theory and practice" (163). At stake in "conceiving ethics outside

the context of emotion" is a "distorted view of how decisions" about what is good or true "take form and come to have a grip on community, culture, and habits of thought" ("Emotion" 164). For Micciche, an ethics devoid of emotion is unethical. Micciche writes: "Emotion is crucial to how people form judgment about what constitutes appropriate action or inaction in a given situation – precisely the realm of ethics" ("Emotion" 169).

Recognizing the "interlocking nature of emotions and ethics" Micciche suggests writing pedagogy is deeply implicated the transmission of value systems and ideology – even in classrooms founded upon amoral pedagogies ("Emotion" 178). Micciche explains: "teachers of writing do not simply work on student writing; we work on student subjectivity, on students as cultural workers, on the production of good citizens, however variously these things might be defined" ("Emotion" 178). For me, taking into account the "interlocking nature of emotions and ethics" explains a great deal why classroom discussions involving moral and ethical aspects can become quickly charged (Micciche, "Emotion" 178). And further, Micciche's argument for a greater awareness of the interlocking nature of morality and emotion in the writing classroom, reinforces my assumptions about the naiveté of adopting an amoral stance toward rhetoric. Like Berlin, Micciche suggests that donning an amoral stance only means that morality will be transmitted pre-critically, resulting in what Welch elsewhere suggests is "teaching ethics badly" ("Emotion" 137).

Where Micciche expands my notion of ethics through her feminist and postcolonial reading of *pathos*, Fleckenstein reshapes Aristotelian *ethos*, updating it through cybernetics to develop her ideas on cyberethos. "Cyberethos," Fleckenstein

writes, "calls us to act on and judge our inescapable dispersal across osmotic rhetorical and material borders," which I take to mean as information is increasingly shared across networks, traditional boundaries become more indeterminate. Fleckenstein refers to this as "boundary confusion" – a "phenomenon […] manifested in our corporeal lives as well" (324). Boundary confusion is of concern to Fleckenstein in her work with Internet writing and internetworked writing technologies, as was much composition scholarship in 2005, at the dawn of social media. Fleckenstein writes: "In a reality founded on shifting sand, on what rock do we build our belief, our life choices, and our ethical actions?" (325). Her response is in key with many scholars working from the direction of the rhetorical tradition: virtue.

Fleckenstein suggests "good character and virtuous behavior are mutually linked" (325). This becomes critical when she reads rhetoric through cybernetics: "*ethos* can be interpreted as an information system, a living network consisting of rhetor, text, audience, and context" (326). Players and scene act together to stage an event, as Fleckenstein suggests, "no single element of a rhetorical act composes itself autonomously" (328). Rather, they "create each other mutually through the establishment of relationships called *prudence, virtue, and good will*, adapting to one another as a means of maintaining the constancy of those relationships" (328, emphasis mine). Thus, Fleckenstein places Aristotelian ethics at the center of cyberethos (for a description of Aristotelian ethics, see Porter, *Rhetorical Ethics* 37). Network theory, then, supports an understanding that "maintaining the constancy of those relationships" is vital to the health of the "living network." In the end, Fleckenstein asks her reader to consider identity as co-constituted by discourse (*ethos*) and "materially constrained" (334). This is important to the

discussion at hand as a moment in which composition scholarship begins to privilege

writing *ethos*, as ethics, to the situated, material practice and material context beyond the

writing subject. "Cyberethos points us, instead," Fleckenstein writes, "to the entire

ecological context as the site for identity and good character" (334).

A third approach to ethics from scholars working on ethics from the direction of

the rhetorical tradition seeks to link ethics more securely to rhetoric through the Classical

Greek notion of *kairos*. Michael Harker reminds his readers the ideas of timeliness and

appropriateness that *kairos* represents cannot be considered outside of the rhetorical

situation or "the realm of action, the realm of ethics" (82). What follows from Harker's

"more complete definition" of *kairos* is that it "goes beyond commonsensical notions that

figure it as a term expressing strictly temporal concerns (94). Rather, Harker forwards

kairos as a reminder "of the ethical responsibility that accompanies the project of

evaluating context before decisions are made in the writing" (94).

While Harker's explicit linkage of *kairos* to ethics seems important here, I am

uncertain what, exactly, Harker's "expanded definition" affords composition scholarship

beyond Porter's earlier work with *kairos*. Porter writes:

> A postmodern rhetorical ethics emphasizes the authority of contextualized
>
> elements and of the situated moment (*kairos*). It says that the particular historical
>
> and situated moment and the particular details and circumstances of that setting
>
> (the 'facts,' values, audiences, timing, historical circumstances, technologies) are
>
> critical. (*Rhetorical Ethics* 158-9)

Clearly, Porter articulates an understanding of kairos beyond a temporal concern,

and further, he conceives of a "kairotic rhetoric ethics," which is, by my reading, largely

what Harker's project points to the possibility of. My intention here is not to dispute the value of Harker's work. Rather, I think it is important to keep in mind the degree of Porter's achievement in articulating the concerns and questions of ethics for writing pedagogy.

A counterpoint to Porter and the scholars of tradition above who have grounded their work in the assumption that rhetoric is necessarily ethical appears in an article authored by Matthew Jackson in 2009. Jackson draws upon the work of philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, whose work I will take up more closely in Chapter 3. However, here it may suffice to briefly state that Levinas' work is informed largely by his experiences as a German Jew in Nazi Germany, and that his work in ethics is best known for his focus on the relationship with the *Other*. Jackson suggests that "a serious consideration of Levinas' philosophy might enliven, rekindle, promote, and heighten the ways in which our work is always-already ethical" (512). Jackson writes:

> It almost seems insulting to insinuate or call into question what might be thought of as the unspoken ethical underpinnings of rhetoric. But again, it may be this *assumption* about an inherent relationship between rhetoric and ethics that leaves us in a precarious position of perhaps not being as preoccupied with ethics as we should. (513)

Jackson, drawing upon Levinas' critique of Western metaphysics, suggests the assumption that rhetoric is inherently ethical is often accomplished by reducing the Other – in this case, ethics – "to the Same by the interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being" (Levinas qtd. in Jackson 514). Examples of the "middle and neutral term" architecting a presupposed link between rhetoric and ethics

"include 'being,' 'spirit,' 'reason,' and 'history'" (Jackson 514). Thus, the relationship between the rhetorical and ethical modes of discourse are governed by a metaphysical system whose fundamental assumptions about being and the nature of reality precede the meeting and dictate the assumptions about the relationship between ethics and rhetoric (514). For example, Jackson suggests "following philosophy, the rhetorical tradition has been pretty *phren-etic* about *phronesis*" – a term central to both Porter and Aristotle's versions of ethics – practical knowledge or wisdom (514). But Jackson criticizes this foundational assumption of the privileged role of reason because "ethical and political action informed and driven primarily and predominantly by well-intentioned reason has all-to-often led to catastrophic results" (514; see also Holdstein; Katz).

Ethics of Rhetorical Virtue

In many ways John Duffy might represent a culminating spirit of much of the scholarship over 30-years taking up in earnest ethics. Like others arriving from the direction of tradition, Duffy responds to fears of unbridled ethical pluralism and moral relativism by forwarding ethical virtue. And he shares with many scholars of the rhetorical tradition the assumption that "the teaching of writing is by definition the teaching of ethics" (230). Duffy explains his ethical presumptions of the rhetorical situation, which is worth quoting at length:

> To make the argument that teaching writing means teaching ethics, we begin with a truism: writing is a social activity. Applied to ethics, the social understanding of writing suggests that when we write for an audience – whether are writing to inform, argue, or tell a story – we propose a relationship with other human beings, our readers. And in proposing such relationships, we inevitably address, either

explicitly and deliberately, or implicitly and unintentionally, the questions that

occupy moral philosophers: what kind of person do I want to be? How should I

treat others? What are my commitments to my community? For writers, these

questions may be rephrased: what kind of writer do I wish to be? What is my

relationship to my readers? What effects will my words have upon my

community? ("Ethical Dispositions" 218)

Duffy's questions are complementary to my own overall research question: Might

I teach writing that leads to the best possible life? Ethics, by Duffy's lights, is a mode of

discourse that seeks answers to questions such as: What kind of person do I want to be?

How should I treat others? What are my commitments to my community? Seen in this

way, I might look for an answer to my question in the realm of ethics. However, simply

linking, or assuming a link, between ethics and rhetoric is just the beginning of a larger

investigation into ethics. It signals an awareness of a need, but integrating ethics into an

effective teaching practice that achieves ethical ends is a formidable, and I submit, a

largely under-addressed problem for writing pedagogy.

In 2014, Duffy takes note of the diminished nature of public debate. Duffy writes:

"The abasement of our public arguments has contributed to […] a rhetorical climate in

which there is no widely shared agreement as to the nature of a fact, or what counts as

evidence or how to interpret what evidence may be presented ("Ethical Dispositions"

210). Duffy sends writing teachers a wake-up call, which I again quote at length for its

insight and eloquence:

Despite the sustained scholarship devoted to the study and teaching of writing,

despite the highly trained Writing Studies faculty leading writing programs across

the nation, and despite the impressive numbers of students completing our courses each year, we seem to have little influence on the conduct of American public argument. The principles we teach are largely absent from the public square, and our conceptions of rhetoric as a method of inquiry and community building seem so much folklore, appealing mythologies that have little purchase in the worlds beyond our classrooms. ("Ethical Dispositions" 211)

As many scholars working from this direction have done, Duffy situates the moral crisis in the destabilizing effects of postmodern theory. "Postmodernism brought a new urgency and vocabulary to ethical inquiry," Duffy writes, in that ethics is "no longer seen as a disinterested set of fixed principles, but as a process of negotiation among competing political and ideological interests" ("Ethical Dispositions" 216). These competing interests to which ethics has been displaced by are variously termed, "power," "politics," and "ideology" ("Ethical Dispositions" 216). And the result of a postmodern cultural studies emphasis in writing classrooms has been to see the "principles we teach are largely absent from the public square, and our conceptions of rhetoric as a method of inquiry and community building seem so much folklore, appealing mythologies that have little purchase in the worlds beyond our classrooms" ("Ethical Dispositions" 211).

Duffy argues for a return to ethics – to "teaching students to reason, speak, and write in ways that address questions associated with the moral life: What shall I say? To whom do I speak? What effects follow from my words?" ("Ethical Dispositions" 221). This is a return from more esoteric conceptions of public discourse to focus directly on the ethics of our communications with others. Duffy writes: "To teach writing, then, is to

teach more than rhetorical structures, strategies, and processes: it is equally to teach the ethical commitments that are enacted in the course of communicating with others" (219).

Duffy's early work emphasizes the responsibility to Other – a position frequently taken by composition scholars I will discuss further in the next chapter (and here represented by Jackson); however, Duffy's position has moved toward remaking Aristotelian virtue ethics into what Duffy terms an "ethics of rhetorical virtue" ("Reconsidering Virtue" 6). Duffy explains: "In the language of the virtues, we have a conception of ethics that is consonant with rhetorical practice" – "a conception of ethics that is context-dependent, responsive to the kairotic moment, social in nature, and developed, according to Aristotle, through instruction, practice, and habit" (6).

Duffy offers an "ethics of rhetorical virtue" in the place of deontological and consequentialist ethics – finding the former's rule-based solutions and the latter's emphasis on outcomes too reductive for the writing situation ("Reconsidering Virtue" 4–5). "Our students' writing will be judged," Duffy explains, "not simply by results, the consequentialist ethic, but by qualities of courage, compassion, and conviction in their written work. An ethics of rhetoric, I mean to suggest, should account for more than consequences" (5).

A virtue is a character trait, writes Duffy, "a disposition, a way of living," for example, "truthfulness, judgment, and wisdom" ("Reconsidering Virtue" 6). Virtue ethics provides a perspective with which to consider how personal character, *ethos* as it were, forms in relation to "the values of the community, its traditions, narratives, and beliefs" (6). Duffy's unique contribution to virtue ethics here is to situate virtue ethics within rhetoric. To the extent "virtues become discursive acts, practices of ethical speech and

writing," Duffy writes, "we may think of them as "rhetorical virtues" (6). Duffy

continues:

> To teach writing is to teach, by definition, the practices of such things as honesty,
>
> empathy, and discernment; of generosity, reflection, and mindfulness. There is a
>
> word for such practices. They are examples of what Aristotle in the *Nicomachean*
>
> *Ethics* called "virtues," and which are today the focus of that branch of moral
>
> philosophy known as "virtue ethics." ("Reconsidering Virtue" 5)

Of particular interest for Duffy is the "debased state of public discourse," which

he hopes to counter by championing a writing pedagogy of rhetorical virtue

("Reconsidering Virtue" 3). "If five million students left our classrooms every year

talking about the truthfulness of claims, the integrity of evidence, the generosity of trying

to understand the arguments of the other side, I am willing to bet the word 'virtue' would

take on new meanings in American cultural and political life" (7).

In 2017, Duffy shares more details regarding his "concept of ethics for the writing

course" ("The Good Writer" 230). He now describes "rhetorical virtues" as "an

alternative to ethical traditions grounded in rules and consequences," – one which "offers,

as well, a way of thinking beyond the critical ethics of postmodernism" ("The Good

Writer" 231). And further, Duffy links the rhetorical virtues to *kairos*: "Virtues are

context-dependent, responsive to the *kairotic* moment, and social in nature, expressing

the values, traditions, and narratives of specific communities and cultures" (235). Duffy

forwards a description of a rhetorical ethics for writing pedagogy that I find compelling:

> The rhetorical virtues, in turn, are the discursive practices of virtue, the expression
>
> in speech and writing of honesty, accountability, generosity, and other qualities.

Like the virtues from which they are derived, the rhetorical virtues reflect the traits, attitudes, and dispositions we associate with a good person, speaking or writing well. More, they are, like rhetoric, *kairotic,* calling for the right words at the right moment, and they are social in nature, conveying in speech and writing the values, traditions, and narratives of the communities in which they were developed. Neither are the rhetorical virtues innate but learned, at least in part, through the instruction, practice, and guidance offered in the writing classroom. ("The Good Writer" 235)

Here then, Duffy connects virtue in both the senses of personal character and in public discourse. For Duffy, the "discursive practice of virtue" assumes virtues are "social in nature, conveying in speech and writing the values, traditions, and narratives of the communities in which they were developed" ("The Good Writer" 235). Duffy suggests, then, virtues might support local, situated ethical pluralism in writing classrooms and communities, and "a way of thinking beyond the critical ethics of postmodernism" ("The Good Writer" 231).

Curator Comments: Writing, Ethics, and Rhetorical Pedagogy

Virtue looms large in this collection of texts. I find it interesting to see so many compositionists offer virtue in response to pedagogical challenges; for example, Bizzell confronts anti-foundational anxiety and Kennedy explores dissensus and *parrhêsia.* Virtue, I learn, is linked to both a personal and a social character. Character, then, becomes a chief pedagogical concern and virtue a means to that end. Finally, both character and virtue reference a moral system. Writing, I claim, is an ongoing moral project. The rhetorical turn in composition studies destabilizes the priority of Truth over

rhetoric (representation), elevating the epistemic status of writing, and reaffirming the rhetorical pedagogical tradition whereby writing, ethics, and rhetoric are tightly bound.

Morality begins to be read rhetorically. Porter offers "rhetorical ethics" and Duffy "ethics of rhetorical virtue," affirming the importance of both rhetoric and ethics to writing pedagogy. Both notions of writing ethics teach me that the situated social-material circumstances and the timeliness of communication take priority over universal notions of what is "good" writing or the "right" way to act. But in the age of social media and celebrity culture, individuality is being challenged, and it may be easy to suggest the local takes precedence, but everywhere global capitalism proves otherwise.

Returning to my discussion of writing as a practice of freedom, I ask what speaks to hooks' suggestion that education be engaged with the "well-being" of "'whole'" human beings" – to "strive not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" (15)? For me, the most striking assumption in this catalog of texts is that discourse is always already morally charged and – whether one is aware of it or not – complicit in the transmission and maintenance of values and beliefs aligned to hegemonic interests. In this sense, it seems obvious that ethics is an important consideration to writing pedagogy; yet somehow, I ended up teaching writing with no sense of writing as an ethical practice. If indeed, as I am arguing here, training students to write in college in America is at root a moral project, then any notion of being outside the moral code – of attaining amorality – is unlikely. So the problem becomes, for me, if language is already value laden, what values am I teaching? What are the values I am imparting in the classroom?

Not unlike Berlin confronting ideology in the classroom, I think the solution lies in centering values in the writing classroom. To this end, I have adopted in my writing classrooms what I describe here as a pluralist, ethical approach – privileging local, contingent, situated knowledges; however, this alone is not enough. For me, the teaching writing as an ethical practice, teaching writing as the practice of freedom, requires I frame the moral boundaries in the classroom (for example, grammar, genre, research methods) as limits, which writers might test. This is because communication is situated in specific material, social, and cultural conditions in a particular historical milieu. The dynamism and specificity of the writing situation overwhelms the moral project and its reliance on universal principles. Therefore, writers must assume that moral horizons – while they appear natural and immutable – are indeterminate until proven otherwise. In short, we are compelled to write between the lines of dominant discourse; we must, therefore, invent reliable means to discover where these lines lie at any given moment, and importantly, to move them.

CHAPTER 3: ETHICS AND POSTMODERN THEORY

Any account we produce must simultaneously inscribe and transcend the self who produces it.

Patricia A. Sullivan, "Ethnography"

In Chapter 3, I continue reviewing composition scholarship's treatment of ethics by considering work from scholars who have embraced poststructuralist and postmodern theory – arriving at ethics, at least in part, to address the effects of these theoretical assumptions on contemporaneous models of writing.[4] If you will, these scholars are map makers, mapping the conceptual landscape as it comes into view, and Marilyn Cooper, Lester Faigley, and Kurt Spellmeyer are representative of the scholarship providing deep theoretical insight into the nature of writing and writing situations. Cooper's ecological model of writing, for example, reimagines the context-based models forwarded by her predecessors ("The Ecology"; cf. Bitzer; Toulmin), and in mapping these new relations, she opens the way for new postmodern interpretations of writing ethics and posthuman radicalizations of writers and writing.

Rationality in Fragments

The resurgence of ethics in composition studies beginning in the late 1980s arrives with scholars articulating the theoretical implication of postmodern theory for writing pedagogy. For me, Lester Faigley's *Fragments of Rationality* best articulates the problems and affronts which postmodernity – and particularly postmodern theory –

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[4] Writing in 1996, Peter Mortensen and Gesa E. Kirsch provide of a reaction to the perceived effects of postmodern theory upon the foundational assumptions of writing pedagogy. Mortensen and Kirsch explain the move toward ethics in writing research "arises," in part from academic feminisms' "frustration with a kind of ethical relativism that has often overtaken – and paralyzed – discussions of subjectivity and agency in postmodern theories of culture" (*Ethics* xx).

presents writing pedagogy in 1992.[5] Faigley summarizes some of the assumptions of postmodern theory as he sees it: "There is nothing outside contingent discourses to which a discourse of values can be grounded – no eternal truths, no universal human experience, no universal human rights, no overriding narrative of human progress" (8). Central among the issues Faigley takes up – aside from his primary concern with the writing subject – is moral relativism.

Postmodern theory's rejection of Enlightenment and Modernist metanarratives (for example, the priority of reason or the myth of progress) lead some scholars to fear that writing instruction might be poised for a slide into widespread moral relativism. To avoid such a conclusion, scholars begin rethinking received models of writing in terms of postmodern theory – imagining writers and writing without many well-cherished foundational suppositions of writing pedagogy (for example, the Humanist subject). Chief among the concerns postmodern theory presents writing pedagogy is the role of rhetoric in constituting meaning, as well as questions of social determination and personal agency, which I examine from writers arriving at ethics from the perspective of writing theory.

Cartographers of the New Ethics of Writing Pedagogy

The rippling effects of postmodern theory upon writing pedagogy sent many compositionists in search of new models to describe the ecology they now found writers and writing inseparable from. Fredric Jameson describes the effects of postmodern theory in terms of cartography, and specifically, the cognitive map whose purpose is "to enable a

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[5] I will follow here the precedent of Lester Faigley who parses "*postmodernism* into three metadiscourses: (1) aesthetic discussions of *postmodernism*; (2) philosophical discussions of *postmodern theory*; and (3) sociohistorical assertions that Western nations, if not indeed all the world, have entered an era of *postmodernity*" (*Fragments* 5–6).

situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly

unrepresentable totality," or in terms of writing, the writing ecosystem (Jameson 90).

Jameson introduces his readers to the "itineraries," the "sea chart or *portulans*," used by

ancient Mediterranean sailors to navigate shoreline routes which detailed important

landmarks and hazards of the coastline along their path but did not situate these local

details in relation to the "unrepresentable totality" (90). The invention of the compass,

and other nautical instruments such as the sextant, transform sea charts into maps by

introducing "a whole new coordinate – that of relationship to the totality" (Jameson 90).

At this point, "cognitive mapping" develops the capacity to coordinate "existential data

(the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the

geographic totality" (Jameson 90). Thus, maps became situated in relation to the whole

and virtual coordinates translatable to physical ones. And last, as our understanding of the

"totality" advances and new technologies improve map accuracy, a new dimension of

cartography emerges, one which makes it "clear that there can be no true maps" nor

further scientific progress in mapmaking (Jameson 90). This new dimension of

cartography, Jameson explains,

> involves what we would today call the nature of representational codes, the
>
> intrinsic structures of the various media, the intervention, into more naive mimetic
>
> conceptions of mapping, of the whole new fundamental question of the languages
>
> of representation itself: and in particular the unresolvable (well-nigh
>
> Heisenbergian) dilemma of the transfer of curved space to flat charts. (90)

Representation, in composition scholarship, is a perennial concern that invokes a

variety of pedagogical concerns. Representation, at root, is a moral question passed down

from Plato as mimesis, and an ethico-political concern taken up in much feminist and

postcolonial scholarship (cf. Colebrook, *Ethics*; Frazer; Irigaray; cf. Mortensen and

Kirsch).[6] But here, I am interested in how composition scholarship has approached the

realization that mapping the writing situation requires in some sense the translation of

curved space onto a flat surface. In other words, as postmodern theory complicates the

received models of writing, how do moral and ethical questions become central to the

various "maps" of writing?

Jameson's cartography metaphor provides a useful analog for the projects

undertaken by the composition scholars here who overlay upon the "sea charts" of

received models of the writing situation a "whole new coordinate" of the writer and

writing's "relationship to the totality" of larger rhetorical, socio-political structures,

raising "*onto-epistemological*" questions about writers and writing (Jameson 90; Barad

829). In the place of foundational, prescriptive texts, these scholars forward descriptive

work, which not only tries to map the relationships beyond text and context, but also

takes into consideration the mediated nature of representations. Thus, much of the work

here initially arrives in the form of critique of older "itineraries" or "sea charts." As

Faigley suggests in 1992: "Postmodern theory offers an ongoing critique of discourses

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[6] For example, consider the two senses of the title of Luce Irigaray's 1985 monograph, *This Sex Which is Not One*, which suggest the female sex is both a plural sex and a non-existent sex – a problem rooted in representations of femaleness. For Irigaray, this is a reference to how the female sex is "misunderstood in sexual difference as it is imagined – or not imagined," and the result of this masculinized imaginary, "the other sex" serves as little more than "the indispensable complement to the only sex" – the male sex (28). Elsewhere, Mortensen and Kirsch foreground the ethics of representation as a critical issue for writing research, writing: "With interpretation a crucial issue, researchers must grapple with the rhetorical construction of interpretive authority. And attendant upon rhetorical construction are a host of ethical questions regarding the rights and responsibilities of representation" (xxi).

that pretend to contain truth and serve to justify practices of domination, but it does not supply a theory of agency or show how a politics is to arise from that critique" (20).

The scholarship here touches upon a central question: What is the writer's relationship to the world? How does this relationship influence writing? In this sense, the scholarship here often arrives at ethics in response to, or on the path toward, addressing some question that postmodern theory poses to writing. Certainly, much of the composition scholarship since 1990 represents, in some sense, a response to the perceived effects of postmodern theory upon writing and teaching writing; however, a few composition scholars have made writing ethics central to their overall projects. So, my task here is to point to a few key moments in the gale of composition scholarship arriving at ethics from the direction of writing theory who appear to me to pursue fundamental questions about being in the world and the ways in which writing is involved in how we know the world and ourselves. These writers are, for me, cartographers of a new ethics of writing pedagogy whose exploration of the limits of our pedagogical knowledge of writing and writers provide for me coordinates for thinking of writing as a practice of freedom.

<div align="center">The Ecological Model of Writing</div>

In a 1986 *College English* essay, Marilyn M. Cooper proposes "an ecological model of writing" while making it clear that "the term ecological" is not "simply the newest way to say 'contextual'" ("The Ecology" 367). Cooper breaks with "contextual models such as Kenneth Burke's dramatistic pentad," objecting to "artificially" separating "writing and what writers do during writing" from "the social-rhetorical situations in which writing gets done, from the conditions that enable writers to do what

they do, and from the motives writers have for doing what they do" (Reither qtd. in Cooper, "The Ecology" 367). Cooper extends the isolated writing situation of received writing models to include social-rhetorical, material, and ideological/moral aspects – situating writing in a greater ecology. In other words, Cooper's ecological model of writing draws back from the individual writer and her immediate context, to consider also "how writers interact to form systems" and how these systems in turn influence the formation of other writers and writing ("The Ecology" 368). And while this might seem like a good place to begin a discussion of activity theory or eco-composition, I suggest Cooper's ecological model of writing is essential to understanding contemporary notions of writing ethics as they will be developed here.

By situating writing in an ecology, Cooper draws attention to the socially situated act of writing. In this sense, writing is never "personal," because it is always already "social" in that it is preceded by an ecology of interrelated social and discursive systems, which provide the codes and structures that make writing possible and determine its legibility. Cooper adds to the socially constructed nature of writing the constraints of material circumstances at the site of the writing event. And further, Cooper notes "ecological systems" are "inherently dynamic" with wave and particle type behavior, whose structures are "constantly changing" ("The Ecology" 368). This dynamic model challenges earlier static ones, or rather, adds another axis to context models – interconnectivity. Cooper writes: "In place of the static and limited categories of contextual models, the ecological model postulates dynamic interlocking systems which structure the social activity of writing" ("The Ecology" 368).

Cooper's ecological model of writing not only challenges context models of the writing event, but also expands our understanding of why writers write. Cooper asserts that the "interlocking systems which structure the social activity of writing" are not given; rather, these systems are "made and remade by writers," and in this sense, "writing changes social reality" and not only, as Lloyd Bitzer argues, in response to exigence (Cooper, "The Ecology" 368). In simpler terms, writing composes the discourses that in turn compose writing. Thus, Cooper suggests writing "is not simply a way of thinking but more fundamentally a way of acting" – a way of being in the world, a generative act "through which we become most truly human" (373).

Returning to my application of Jameson's analogy, the ecological model of writing adds to the cognitive mapping of the writing moment a relationship to "totality" missing in earlier "itineraries." The ecological model also factors in the ideological and moral vestment of discourse and the dynamic, inter-related nature of the elements composing the writing ecology. The result is a new cognitive map of writers and writing as inextricable agents in the writing of both self and world.

<div align="center">Writing and the Web of Purpose</div>

Linda Flower's 1988 essay, "The Construction of Purpose in Writing and Reading" builds upon Cooper's ecological model of writing, specifically, how do writers exercise agency while concurrently being composed by discourse. This position reflects Flower's recognition of the "shaping power of language and context" (528). However, models that focus on the social construction of writers and writing, for Flower, tend to emphasize the determined nature of writers. Flower seeks to move models of writerly agency out of the realm of the isolated individual psychology to public registers of the

social, developing her "web of purpose" model of social writing which might "still respect and explain individual, human agency" (532, 528). "Still respect" implies a governing set of values, which suggests to me that Flower is clearly in the realm of morality and ethics, but here I want to discuss her writing model.

Flower contributes an ecological model of writing interested in understanding how the agent and the environment work to co-constitute texts and social reality. Flower uses reading as an example of this co-constitutive work, by adopting "a broader vision of reading as both a constructive, cognitive process and a rhetorical event in which readers use their knowledge of human purposes to build a meaningful and coherent text" (549). Human purposes, here, sounds interesting, which I take to be the "complex web of meaning which writers build and which readers in their own, independently constructive way infer" (Flower 549). Flower's research, then, seeks to understand "how individual purposes interact with context and convention in the creation of a text" (549). And as a result of this focus inward to out, Flower arrives at a model of writing which suggests agent and environment co-constitute texts and lived reality.

Writing and Ideology

In an essay published the same year as Flower's essay (1988), James Berlin further complicates the ecological model of writing by layering upon it ideology. Where Cooper calls attention to the networked relationship of the site of writing to larger context of the whole, and Flower layers upon this the writer's web of purpose, Berlin suggests that, in fact, "ideology provides the language to define the subject (the self), other subjects, the material world, and the relation of all of these to each other" (479). In other words, ideology works like a moral system making sensible writers and writing as we

know them through "a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed" (Berlin 492). Thus, Berlin provides a clear indication of how Cooper's ecological model of writing might be understood as an ethical model of writing in that writing and writers, in fact all lived reality, can only be understood through value systems and ideology "inscribed in language practices," which color "all features of our experience" (479). That is, for Berlin, both ideology and language mediate the subject's experience of reality (cf. Kent).

The implications of Berlin's image of the mediated nature of writer and writing presents fundamental challenges to received notions of writing pedagogy. In terms of Flower's particular version of cognitive process pedagogy, for example, Berlin suggests "the rhetoric of cognitive psychology refuses the ideological question altogether, claiming for itself the transcendent neutrality of science" (478). However, by the time Flower's essay is published, postmodern theory, and deconstruction in particular, had rendered assumptions of neutrality in scientific discourse untenable; rather, Berlin explains, "every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology" (492). And while expressive writing pedagogy, according to Berlin, "has always openly admitted its ideological predilections," such approaches are "open to appropriation" by larger forces through an emphasis on personal expression without examining how that expression is filtered through ideology (478).

In place of cognitive process and expressionist models of writing, Berlin forwards a social-epistemic pedagogy that is "self-consciously aware of its ideological stand," and which makes "the very question of ideology the center of classroom activities" (Berlin 478). By centering ideology in the writing classroom, Berlin foregrounds the assumption

that all discourse arrives from ideology, that all argument is "arguing from ideology," and in fact, "no other kind of argument is possible" – "a position that must first be explained" (Berlin 478). For my purposes, Berlin's argument, though focused on ideology, surfaces the underlying moral and ethical assumptions which make ideology tenable. In my terms, ideology is a value system translated into practice.

<div align="center">Ethics and Informal Reasoning</div>

Berlin's ideological critique is concerned, in part, with ethics in terms of the rhetorical situation, creating an affinity between his notion of ideology and writing ethics. In this light, it is interesting to consider Berlin in terms of Stephen Toulmin's method of informal reasoning, where *evidence* validating a *claim* is made relevant through the support of unstated *warrants* – or background knowledge. Warrants are assumptions about the rules of the game. They represent presuppositions (pre-supposed beliefs) about the nature of the relationship between the claim and evidence, as well as what evidence is considered valid given the nature of the statement. For example, "seeing is believing" is a warrant which validates eye-witness accounts, which is an unstated, shared value assumed to be held in common with others – and an onto-epistemological[7] assumption about being and the nature of knowledge. Morals (as shared values) in this sense are bedrock upon which ideological frameworks rest.

Warrants signal the moral order, they point to moral and ethical presumptions about how things "ought" to be done, they sit in judgment of the evidence. For Berlin,

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[7] This term is borrowed from Karen Barad's essay "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," which investigates the entanglements between Neils Bohr's physics and cultural theorists, such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, and others, to develop her notion of "agential realism" based on her work with ethico-onto-epistemological theory of agency.

ideology sits at an even deeper register, providing the "standards for making ethical and aesthetic decisions: what is good, right, just, beautiful, attractive, enjoyable, and its opposites" (Berlin 479). Whether values are the seat of the soul or ideology, Berlin suggests that humans, in the end, are discursive beings who understand themselves and the world only through language – and worse, language thoroughly vested in ideology. Thus, for Berlin, understanding the mediated nature of human experience and the ways human actions are "structured and normalized" through discourse are central pedagogical concerns (Berlin 479).

Sandra Stotsky, writing in 1992, helps illustrate this point through her challenge to Berlin's pedagogy – particularly his call to center ideology in the classroom. For Stotsky, while Berlin's pedagogy seeks to uncloak ideological operations in the classroom, it insufficiently accounts for the "ethical dimensions of the intellectual processes that shape" students and instructors, and further, it does not help "students learn to use moral principles for guiding" the "exercise of cognitive judgment" (Stotsky 794). In other words, for Stotsky, Berlin does not account for the degree with which moral and ethical concerns shape our decisions, nor does he support students in exercising moral and ethical judgment in decision making.

<div align="center">The Moral Education of Academic Discourse</div>

Stotsky suggests that writing instruction is in some degree a moral education – an attempt to master the codes and conduct governing academic discourse, to join the conversation. Therefore, Stotsky concludes, "it is clearly our responsibility as composition teachers to articulate to our students the academic principles that should guide thinking and learning about any topic" (795). Stotsky highlights a troubling gap,

given her assumptions: Composition "scholarship never seems to note that students'

moral reasoning may also be developed by the very way in which we teach academic

writing" (Stotsky 795). That is, language is unavoidably moral; so, what do writing

teachers teach about morality? Berlin might suggest that we aim to surface ideological

bias in the classroom in an effort to neutralize it. Stotsky, on the other hand, would

surface aspects of the privileged discourse as the very basis of scholarship. Stotsky

explains: "Our intellectual work includes our academic *manners* as well as our academic

mores" (795, emphasis mine).

Clearly writing emerges in the context of a social and moral codes, how could it

then be taught apart from ethics? Does this not bring to mind Berlin's critique of writing

pedagogies claiming ideological neutrality? On these terms, amorality is impossible, and

when composition instructors – intentionally or not – teach writing amorally, we are

really just teaching morality badly (cf. Welch 137). But the question that follows is harder

than the one we just answered: Whose morality should be taught?

For Stotsky, the purpose of a college writing course is to learn academic

discourse, and importantly, to learn how to perform academic discourse. The manners and

mores need to be learned because these are the fundamental "moral principles for

guiding" the "exercise of cognitive judgment" (794). Stotsky provides her four guiding

principles, or moral guidelines, toward more ethical writing: "(1) respect for the purposes

of academic language; (2) respect for other writers; (3) respect for the integrity of the

subject; and (4) respect for the integrity of the reader" (800).

What I want to suggest here is that Stotsky's argument rest upon a prescriptive

morality whose teleological ends were presumably to prepare students, in a very real

sense to inculcate students, to participate in a specific discourse community. In contradistinction to Stotsky's discursive moralism, I set Berlin's ideological critique, which is grounded in the analysis of value systems which warrant claims. Thus, Berlin offers a descriptive and analytical apparatus of sorts, an ethical methodology, whose basic assumption may be prescriptive (e.g. all discourse is biased), but whose purpose is descriptive (e.g. critique). Stotsky and Berlin, as I have presented their work here, illustrate a distinction I wish to make between prescriptive and descriptive methods as moral and ethical tactics in writing pedagogy.

<div align="center">Agency and Community</div>

In 1989, Kurt Spellmeyer, writing in *College English*, provides a third point of reference along the lines I have drawn between Berlin and Stotsky. Spellmeyer's interest at this point is the "freshman writer," about whom he provocatively writes: "I believe that we cannot really teach writing at all, cannot show students how to construct themselves in language" ("Foucault" 716). Spellmeyer takes issue with constructionists for failing to fully account for the agency of writing and writers, overemphasizing, in the end, social determination. Spellmeyer favors a Foucauldian image of knowledge "as an activity rather than a body of information" ("Foucault" 715). This dynamic image of the interplay of activity which constitutes knowledge affords Foucault to illustrate what he means by *knowledge*: a *game* – "games of truth," by which Foucault means to emphasize the constructedness (and arbitrary nature) of even the most authoritative discourse (Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* 18).

Understanding knowledge as an effect of the act of playing games of truth, I understand Berlin's ideological critique as concerned with making explicit the unstated

rules of the game, while Stotsky's pedagogical strategy appears to endorse a received set of rules for playing the game (for example, the rules of academic discourse), which she presumably has students assimilate to in order to gain competence in the academic games of truth. For Spellmeyer, Stotsky's position is untenable because, "we cannot join a discourse community as we would a club or religious group, by committing its doctrines to memory or binding ourselves to its precepts" ("Foucault" 721). Yet, discourse is to some extent a game that is played, a set of rules that the game is played by. And it is in this sense, Spellmeyer, following Foucault, is interested in enacting resistance rather than engage in critique. While Berlin's ideological critique "serves to underscore the multiplicity of social forces impinging upon the self, forces that struggle against one another to enter discourse through the 'I,'" Spellmeyer seeks, provocatively, to call into question the teaching practices that make these assumptions about writing on the grounds they fail to deliver.

Spellmeyer asks, "if knowledge is neither a body of information nor a system of unchanging rules, what should teachers of writing teach?" ("Foucault" 715). Finding both Berlin and Stotsky's answers wanting, Spellmeyer offers a response that suggests proximity to Cooper. Citing Foucault's own attempts to reinvent the direction and methodology of his late work in ethics, Spellmeyer suggests that the first step toward a "method" that can help "students learn to think differently" is "uncertainty and apprehension" – to "find reason to hesitate from one step to the next" ("Foucault" 715). The problem with certainty, for Spellmeyer, is that it arises from familiarity, mindless habit, whereas "uncertainty permits the knower" to pause and hesitate before moving, and as a result "to explore the opportunities for 'freedom' within a game of truth, through a

process Foucault compares to the Greek *askēsis* (ασκησις) – not self-denial, as the word *asceticism* now implies, but self-training or self-fashioning" ("Foucault" 716).

Returning to knowledge as an effect of participating in games of truth, Spellmeyer suggests that "the activities we call knowledge involve more than compliance with rules or conventions," to successfully apply knowledge, players "must also devise strategies for 'problematization,' for changing the rules as we go along" ("Foucault" 715). Changing the rules of the game, the penultimate act of individual agency and liberty for both Spellmeyer and Foucault, is an expression of self-fashioning. The task of writing pedagogy, Spellmeyer suggests, is to "allow in our students' writing the same 'mastery of the self' Foucault pursued, a practice 'grounded in liberty, and not in an ethic of alienated imitation" (716). This is accomplished by encouraging students to "go beyond the familiar by transposing their experience into our games of truth," to help them "recognize, through their own struggle toward speech, that every form of social practice" contains both compliance to moral codes and a "dangerous act of resistance" to the rules (Spellmeyer, "Foucault" 716). It is this resistance, the knowledge of one's liberty attained through self-training, and not through imitation of instructor models, that is the goal of Spellmeyer's writing ethics – the knowledge of choice and the capacity to choose the best way forward toward what Aristotle considers the goal of practical philosophy *eudaimonia* (ευδαιμονια) – the highest human good (see Polansky x).

I read Spellmeyer's importation of Foucauldian ethics into the writing classroom as offering an unexpected answer to Cooper's somewhat more cooperative view of the ecological model of writing. For Spellmeyer, the openings to rewrite the social occur in transgressive acts, resistance and rule breaking – creative responses when individuals

reach a limit of orderly (moral) discourse, where one encounters "a 'discontinuity,' […] a point of intersection between divergent interests, channels, and communities," and yet, must self-fashion an "I" capable of entering into that discourse ("Foucault" 720). The capacity for this arrives through "self-training" in which the individual re-interprets received codes – social and moral codes that ensure a certain efficacy (for example, genre and social expectations of a discourse community). This transgressive action of resistance to social and moral expectations forces writers onto uncertain ground and "through a practice of self-fashioning, […] the writer cultivates a new 'relation' to himself which 'resists codes and powers,' a relation which must continually change to sustain its capacity for productive resistance" (Deleuze qtd. in Spellmeyer, "Foucault" 720). Spellmeyer summarizes:

> We postpone discourse in the name of discourse when we silence those exterior voices our students bring to class without knowing it, voices from the home and from the past, nearly forgotten, which our alien words might reanimate. Because discourse is fundamentally transgressive, the more we attempt to simplify and regulate language by reducing it to an 'academic' univocality, the less occasion students have to make eventful use of their own language and experience. ("Foucault" 722)

Spellmeyer brings to the ecological model of writing a question of central importance: Who is writing? And in so doing, Spellmeyer highlights the importance of enacting resistance and self-fashioning at the site of writing where "divergent interests, channels, and communities" all vie to define the writer according to their various social and moral codes ("Foucault" 720). This capacity for self-making inherent in language is

enabled through idiosyncratic, subjective language practices – the very practices often suppressed in favor of academic discourse conventions. Here, I better understand Spellmeyer's claim that he "cannot show students how to construct themselves in language" ("Foucault" 716). To do so would undercut student agency – self-making and strategies of resistance already in tension with forces of social determinism.

<div align="center">Social Constructionist Theory and Morality</div>

I want to pause to better understand Spellmeyer's criticism of social constructionists for failing to fully account for the agency of writers by overemphasizing social determination. To do this, I need to establish how the term "social construction" is used in composition scholarship. Joseph Petraglia, writing contemporaneously with the writers presented thus far, suggests that "social construction" is a "somewhat generic term for social knowledge-production that composition has adopted in arguing for rhetoric's epistemic powers" (38; see also Scott). The idea that "knowledge is rhetorical," for Petraglia, suggests that "knowledge is created, maintained, and altered through an individual's interaction with and within his or her 'discourse community'" (38). In other words, "we generate knowledge" by testing our beliefs about physical reality and then "justifying those beliefs socially" (Petraglia 39).

Petraglia's social constructionist notion of knowledge lines up with Spellmeyer's seconding of Foucault's image of knowledge as action. However, Petraglia warns that "social construction" is a "rubric under which a number of theories of social knowledge are subsumed" (38). If we understand social construction in terms of the effect it has had on composition scholarship, then the "social constructionist perspective has resulted in a focus on discourse communities" and the ways "in which the audience (that is, the

community) shapes the discourse of its members" (Petraglia 40). Thus, "social constructionists in composition" seek "to promote access to knowledge-creating communities as a critical first step toward student empowerment" (Petraglia 40). This emphasis on personal empowerment through access to "a broader social matrix" has resulted in tying social constructionist pedagogies to "issues of social justice and empowerment," even though as Petraglia explains, "there is little in constructionist theory itself that suggests a moral or political stance" (51). Hence, Petraglia forwards a notion of social construction outside of or exterior to moral and ethical consideration, which helps me to understand why so many composition scholars exploring social-epistemic rhetorics have made moral and ethical questions of central importance to writing pedagogy (cf. Bizzell, "The Politics"; Faigley; Porter, "Developing").

While social constructionists rally to discourse communities, Spellmeyer, writing in 1993, expresses his dismay in finding compositionists still discussing *community*: "the subject of endless conference papers and journal articles," which no longer seems "to open up new areas of research for our profession," but "close them off instead" ("A Comment" 90). At stake for Spellmeyer are the "epistemological fallacies" lurking beneath the abstract term *community*: "Defenders of 'community' tried to dismiss an enormous range of important issues – the phenomenology of textual meaning, the relationship between speech and writing, the role of difference and dissent in communication" ("A Comment" 89–90). And further, constructionists "often seem to believe that people merely suppose they have self-awareness and agency," by presuming that "communities are the 'real' social agents – or should be" ("A Comment" 92). Spellmeyer reminds his readers that "'communities' are made by human agency, and

when people claim to speak for a collective, they speak first of all for themselves" ("A Comment" 92). Thus, Spellmeyer reminds me that even a term as ubiquitous as "social" (for example, social construction, or social-epistemic rhetoric) is a deeply contested term – which is often deployed to lift the site of knowledge production from the material circumstances of individual action to the abstract register of social action.

Another compositionist who shares Spellmeyer's desire to dwell in the contested site of the writing subject is Lester Faigley, whose landmark text in writing ethics presents one of the earliest and most comprehensive treatments from composition scholarship regarding the writing subject as understood through the assumptions of postmodern theory. Faigley describes his project as using "postmodern theory" to better understand "some of what has happened in composition studies since the 1960s," and ultimately, "to address what I see as the most vexed question in composition studies – the question of the subject" (22).

The "question of the subject" is of central importance to Faigley in that "the production of a student subject is a chief outcome of a course in composition" (23; see also Booth, "The Ethics"). However, Faigley notes, the "production" of the student subject is problematized by many of the assumptions of postmodern theory, which he describes as "there is nothing outside contingent discourses to which a discourse of values can be grounded – no eternal truths, no universal human experience, no universal human rights, no overriding narrative of human progress" (8). While the central concern of Faigley's monograph is the writing subject, his discussion of the production of the student subject is of vital importance to my understanding of writing ethics.

Of interest, then, is Faigley's treatment of the production of student subjectivities, which I suggest is a moral project in that teachers aim to "produce" students who can perform writing in accordance with the social and moral norms of a target discourse (academic, corporate, civic, *etc.*). For Faigley, "the molding of these subjects results not so much from the imposition of power from above as from the effects of an array of discourse practices" (23). In other words, the practices and texts of college writing instruction form a "disciplinary regime of composition studies," which impels students to subject themselves to – recognize themselves as subjects of – the discourse of composition studies (that is, compose and identify themselves as writing subjects). As writing subjects, students are then encouraged to make themselves and their writing legible and coherent according to the discourses they encounter, which usually means they suppress their contradictions (Faigley 133).

Faigley turns to Jean-François Lyotard, and in particular his notion of the *differend* to explain what is at stake in suppressing contradictions. Faigley reads Lyotard's *The Differend* as "contesting the tyranny of coherence by investigating the politics of articulation" (239). For Faigley, the "tyranny of coherence" presents a horizon for emerging notions of epistemic rhetoric, but more importantly, Faigley sees in Lyotard an insistence "that ethics is also the obligation of rhetoric" – the "accepting the responsibility for judgment" (239). Faigley links his notion of judgment to Aristotle, who suggests "to select and to limit, to discover the best available means of persuasion" (239). This notion of judgment is, for Faigley, supremely ethical in "pausing to reflect on the limits of understanding. It is respect for diversity and unassimilated otherness. It is finding spaces to listen" (239).

Like Robert Connors, Faigley points to the central importance of composition textbooks to the (moral) project of producing student subjects. Textbooks operate as manner manuals or code of conduct manuals for student subjects, which "'conduct' students through acts of writing and at the same time set out a possible field of 'conduct' for a student writer that has implications beyond the classroom" (Faigley 146). Faigley points to one textbook, in print since 1950, as an example of the deep ties between writing and ethics. McCrimmon begins the first edition (1950) of his textbook with a single, stark assertion: "*All effective writing is controlled by the writer's purpose,*" (McCrimmon qtd. in Faigley 147; cf. Flower). McCrimmon explains:

> The writer, therefore, must always begin with a clear sense of purpose. This means that before he starts to write he must give careful attention to two related questions: "What *precisely* do I want to do?" and "How can I best do it?" Answering these questions properly is the first step toward writing well. (qtd. in Faigley 147)

Not unlike Flower's centering of purpose in her cognitive map of writing, McCrimmon now transforms this notion into ethical reflection: "What precisely do I want to do?" and "How can I best do it?" At root, to ask how to best do something is to frame an ethical inquiry in that one must reflect on the effects of the action upon oneself and others, to consider the impact on one's relationships, and to account for one's responsibilities in acting, and ultimately, the hope is that such judgments lead to *eudaimonia* – the highest human good. For me, this is a deceptively simple equation that assumes I understand the nature and limitations of my perception.

Ontology and Writing Ethics

Writing in 1992, Thomas Kent provides some of the groundwork that will eventually support his model of post-process writing pedagogy, and in doing so, Kent, like Spellmeyer, challenges many of the certainties of and moral presumptions undergirding social-epistemic notions of writing pedagogy. Kent takes issue with contemporary research into "discourse production," which he finds "adheres to the Cartesian claim that a split exists between the human mind and the rest of the world" (57). Kent refers to the effects of assuming the Cartesian split as "internalism," and one effect of presuming this divide is the splitting of the internal world into "a subjective 'in here' and an objective 'out there' mediated by a discrete conceptual scheme" (57). At stake, then, in accepting a Cartesian ontology is the assumption that "knowledge can be knowledge only of a conceptual scheme," such as, for example, language or scientific method (57). Alarmingly, for Kent, "internalism in one form or another controls our current thinking about the production of discourse" – thinking which Kent suggests we should outright abandon in favor of some more productive way of "talking about writing" (58). Kent writes:

> If we want to encourage students to think about writing as communicative interaction and not as a skill (like riding a bike) that can be mastered and internalized, I believe that we should become strong externalists and stop talking about writing in transcendental and internalist terms, and, consequently, stop employing a dialectic instructional methodology that presupposes essentialism and transcendence" (70).

This shift from an internalist model of writing to an externalist one, according to Kent, "would challenge us to drop our current process-oriented vocabulary, and begin talking about our concrete social and public uses of language" (70).

Kent's ontological criticism of the Cartesian bias of writing scholarship, sets the stage for what will eventually become a central preoccupation of scholars arriving at ethics from the direction of writing theory: What is the writer's relationship to the world? For example, Cooper's ecological model of writing when understood in internalist terms assumes the writer is somehow outside the environment – a subject whose knowledge of the world is mediated – interpreted through language, cultural assumptions, *etc.*; whereas, in externalist terms, the writer is inseparable from the environment, and writing is immanent – directly sensible and materially constrained.

Kent makes an important distinction in his observations of what are traditionally considered "competing vocabularies" from expressivist, cognitivist, and social-constructionist pedagogical approaches – "regularly positioned in contrast" to one another – which "are nevertheless bound together" (58). Kent continues, by the "notion that a separation exists between a subject 'in here' and an objective 'out there'" demonstrable "by isolating the conceptual schemes embedded in these vocabularies" that function to "mediate between our internal mental states and the external world" (58). In other words, Kent foregrounds an ontological dimension to writing ethics. What counts as a "being" speaks directly to writing ethics in terms of *moral community* – the "community" one is morally responsible to. Kent also introduces an epistemological and methodological element in his rejection of transcendent claims on writing in favor of the immanent and empirical. Thus, as a result of Kent's ontological critique, composition

scholars modeling writing through postmodern theory, must question "presuppositions and beliefs" about the nature of "being" in order to fully understand how the conceptual spaces of writing are presented to students, as well as how these schemata serve to structure writers and writing.

Returning to Cooper, writing eleven years later in 1997, I find that she is working deliberatively in ethics. Like Kent, she hovers near the ontological in her approach. Cooper's concern with ethics arrives through a critique of critical pedagogy she delivered in a breakout presentation at the 1995 Conference on College Composition and Communication (RE: Question)[8]. Cooper's feminist critique points to the vestiges of masculine hierarchy (rooted in a pernicious Cartesianism) played out in critical pedagogy classrooms where teachers retain too much authority. For Cooper, "the theory of postmodern ethics makes clear" that teachers must "allow their students to make decisions about their writing and to take responsibility for the effects of those decisions if they are to help them be (not become) responsible writers and responsible citizens in the classroom" ("Postmodern Ethics" 28). Cooper's emphasis on "being" is part of her critique of the heavy-handed critical pedagogue who retains too much authority in the classroom, and for the sake of efficacy, resorts to "speaking for and above others," and providing lessons that "fall back on the modernist assumptions about knowledge and ethical behavior deriving from authority," which for Cooper, serves to delegitimize the "beliefs and values" students bring to the writing classroom ("Postmodern Ethics" 25).

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[8] Marilyn Cooper's presentation materials entitled, "Postmodern Ethics in the Writing Classroom" were not available at the time of writing, so I am grateful to her for sending them to me by email.

Cooper offers in contradistinction a postmodern ethics of writing grounded in an ontological condition of being-in-relation-to-an-other.

<p style="text-align:center">Ethics of The Other</p>

Cooper looks to Zygmunt Bauman's *Postmodern Ethics* to suggest "teachers as intellectuals have an important role in helping students as citizens become conscious of the complexities of the problems that face them, but they must do so in a way that opens possibilities, rather than dictating positions" ("Postmodern Ethics" 25). That is, they "must see each student as an autonomous moral agent, as someone who responds to the face of the other, as someone who acts" ("Postmodern Ethics" 25). Cooper looks to philosopher Emmanual Levinas to develop her understanding of how student subjects are constituted through a "notion of morality" as a "responsibility for and responsiveness to others," and through this action becoming, in Bauman's words, "the irreplaceable I" who awakens through the taking of responsibility for another ("Postmodern Ethics" 13). Thus, for Cooper, the insight of reading writing pedagogy through postmodern ethics arrives in a renewed sense of the importance of agency and the notion that "people who are not prevented from taking responsibility may choose to be responsible in what they say and do" ("Postmodern Ethics" 13). In other words, as responsible citizens, students must be free to act, to be held accountable for their actions, and to feel the full effects of the effects of their action.

Providing the space for students to assume responsibility for their comments requires a degree of openness to the full range of possible perspectives from students, and perhaps raises the possibility for students to air racist, homophobic, sexist, ableist sentiments in the classroom. Cooper acknowledges these tensions and points to Richard

Miller's essay, "Fault Lines in the Contact Zone" to the two tactics Miller believes most writing teachers resort to when confronted by "hate" speech surfaced in a writing class: Either turn the student "over to the police or a professional counselor" or ignore "the content of the essay" by "commenting on its formal aspects" (Cooper, "Postmodern Ethics" 4). For Cooper, both these tactics are unacceptable in that they result in decontextualizing writing by taking the "essay out of the realm of personal responsibility" and surrendering individual responsibility for the ideas expressed "as an expression of general social forces" to be dealt with by institutional authorities ("Postmodern Ethics" 5). In contrast, Cooper believes an ethical writing pedagogy must afford students the openings to experience the "effects and consequences of such speech and writing," meaning, such writing should be regarded as "a particular action performed by a particular person and directed at a particular other" rather than as a "decontextualized expression of a broad social problem" ("Postmodern Ethics" 5). Thus, for Cooper, writing pedagogy must not elide the responsibility for writing from the writer; to do so would necessarily limit the freedom of the writer to act, and ultimately, to assume responsibility for their ideas, actions, and words.

Cooper arrives at her novel approach to moral and ethical responsibility through an ontological critique of individualism. Cooper explains:

> The notion of individualism that opposes the free, private actions of an individual to the conformist public behavior required by society captures only a part of our everyday notion of individualism. In particular, it leaves out the way that individuals construct their identities in social interaction, by the way they behave toward one another in private and in public. (8)

For Cooper, individual identities are constituted through social interactions. Cooper explains this through structuration – in the sense Anthony Giddens develops it – as a dual structure expressing the "mutual dependence of structure and agency" (Cooper, "Postmodern Ethics" 16). In other words, structures determine subjects, and simultaneously, empower the subject – for example, laws might identify one as a citizen in possession of certain inalienable rights.

Cooper explains that Gidden's image of structuration presents for Michel Foucault a kind of "double bind," which changes the nature of the problem of individual agency, by suggesting a subject is both constructed and empowered by discourse, the point, for Foucault, is not "to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are" – specifically, "the type of individualization which is linked to the state" (Foucault qtd. in Cooper, "Postmodern Ethics" 10). For Cooper, reading through Foucault, writerly agency understood in terms of structuration and postmodern ethics requires "new forms of subjectivity," which are arrived at "through the refusal" of the individuality "which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (Foucault qtd. in Cooper, "Postmodern Ethics" 10). Thus, the work of critical pedagogy, when read through Cooper's lens of ethics and postmodern theory, is to make possible new configurations of the subject in relation to the world.

Cooper's ecological model of writing, then, takes on both ontological and ethical overtones. Her ecological model might avoid the Cartesian subject but is predicated "on the possibility of an individual acting without guarantees in ambivalent situations and taking responsibility for those actions" ("Postmodern Ethics" 17). This strikes me as optimistic, but Cooper is reporting from experience, and she suggests that students can

learn to assume responsibility by "being answerable to others for the effects of one's

actions and being aware of that responsibility" ("Postmodern Ethics" 17). To sketch a

writing classroom where responsibility is enacted, Cooper draws upon political theorist

and feminist, Iris Marion Young, and in particular, her analogy of a city as "a form of

social relations" lived as "the being together of strangers" (Young qtd. in Cooper,

"Postmodern Ethics" 21). The "being together of strangers" illustrates Young's image of a

lived ethics of difference. In urban spaces, Young explains, "city persons and groups

interact within spaces and institutions" where each "experiences themselves as belonging

to" the social structure "without those interactions dissolving into unity or commonness"

(qtd. in Cooper, "Postmodern Ethics" 21). This is to say, "city dwellers depend on the

mediation of thousands of other people and vast organizational resources in order to

accomplish their individual ends," they are "bound to one another," with "common

problems and common interests, but they do not create a community of shared final ends,

of mutual identification and reciprocity" (Cooper, "Postmodern Ethics" 21). Thus,

Cooper imagines college writing classrooms like cities, which "might become a

revitalized social sphere, a place where citizens come together without forming a

community, where they act autonomously and are responsible to one another without

knowing one another, where they can bear witness to the differend" ("Postmodern

Ethics" 21).

Thus, Cooper suggests, "the goal of critical pedagogy in classroom discussions is

not to find solutions to public issues that confront us all, but to open up possibilities for

action" ("Postmodern Ethics" 24). For me, this echoes Foucault's description of his role

as public intellectual, which is to "pose [problems] with the greatest rigor, with the

maximum complexity and difficulty so that a solution does not arise all at once"
(*Remarks* 158). Similarly, in terms of critical pedagogy, Cooper endorses Ira Shor's
critical method where, as Cooper explains, "teachers pose problems or present generative
themes" to bring the "complexities of everyday life into focus" and not ever to explicate
"an official or authoritative perspective on the problem" ("Postmodern Ethics" 24).
Cooper makes a crucial distinction for writing ethics by differentiating between asking
students to be "critical of their positions" and "enabling students to become conscious of
the implications and effects of their positions" ("Postmodern Ethics" 25). The former
asks students to critique ideology whereas the latter invites students to take up an ethical
responsibility toward the other. Cooper describes Foucault's refusal to speak for others,
writing, "the right to speech and the political imagination must be returned to" those for
whom the problem is a problem, but not in an authoritative manner that risks simply
"telling students that the beliefs and the values that they have been taught and have
accepted are wrong" ("Postmodern Ethics" 25). Rather, for Cooper, writing teachers
"must assume the responsibility of helping students understand the effects of speech and
writing," to "help them reflect on their actions rather than insisting that their speech and
writing demonstrate 'correct' positions" ("Postmodern Ethics" 27). And further, writing
teachers "must respond to [student] writing as transitive and consequential," that is, never
undertaken without reference to its effects, and "rather than drawing out through
discussion the complex consequences" of their positions, writing instructors must
"enforce an ethical code if they are to 'empower' students to be agents for social change"
("Postmodern Ethics" 28).

By grounding her writing pedagogy and practice in responsibility, Cooper hopes students will begin to recognize and account for the effects of their words and writing. For Cooper, when students become sensitive to the results of their discursive acts, they are confronted by the responsibility to Others. For Levinas, this face-to-face encounter with an Other is the ontological condition of being – that is, the student subject arises only in relation to an Other. By modeling her classroom after the urban spaces of the city, where individuals feel as if they belong without the need to collapse belonging into a unity (or a community, which effaces difference and dissent to appear united), Cooper creates a classroom space where students might experience their writing as having real effects in the world and upon others, and to claim ethical responsibility for those effects, and with this experience, be (not become) empowered agents of social change.

<div align="center">Ethics as Critique</div>

In 1996, Theresa Enos publishes the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, to which Richard L. Johannesen contributes the entry for "ethics." Johannesen's entry is interesting because it provides a baseline for the theoretical/ philosophical understanding of moral and ethical writing, and further, it illuminates the effects of professionalizing discourse on writing pedagogy. Johannesen writes: "An emphasis on duties, obligations, rules, principles, and the resolution of complex ethical dilemmas has dominated the contemporary philosophy of ethics" (239). While I think it would be fair to characterize Cooper's postmodern writing ethics as, fundamentally, an "obligation" to an Other, I believe Johannesen's emphasis on the "resolution of complex ethical dilemmas" might be interpreted to justify the authority of the instructor as facilitator of problem solving (239). This would, of course, stand in contrast to Cooper's critique of teacher authority. In this

respect, Johannessen's encyclopedic entry demonstrates the degree to which the novel

approach to ethics in Cooper's 1995 CCCC presentation had not yet been absorbed into

mainstream notions of writing and ethics, and which remains Modernist in its privileging

of problem "resolution."

A second point I want to highlight in Johannesen's encyclopedia entry is his

image of postmodern theory as critique. Johannesen writes: "Postmodern theorists

unmask and question the fundamental rules, norms, and procedures imbedded in cultures

and institutions that are unquestioned, taken for granted, and simply taken as the way

things are" (239). The "fundamental rules, norms, and procedures" that Johannesen lists

are, by my lights, clearly grounded in value systems and the moral codes supporting these

systems of value. Thus, Johannesen positions ethics, and particularly ethics enacting the

values of postmodern theory, as ethical critique. He goes on to reinforce this position:

"While postmodern theorists differ on a number of concerns, virtually all demonstrate

concern for exposing the (often unnoticed) rules, roles, and regulations for discourse and

language as major determinants of self, institutions, and cultures" (239). Again,

Johannesen points to the "rules, roles, and regulations for discourse," which I've termed

here as moral codes of writing, but he also adds the consideration of the mediating role of

"discourse and language" in determining how we understand writers and writing. If I read

this as an internalist argument for the divided nature of reality accessible to the subject

only through conceptual knowledge (that is, language, etc.), then I might conclude that

Johannesen presents a definition of writing ethics tainted by fundamental Cartesian

assumptions (cf. Kent). This would further support the idea that while Johannesen

describes ethics in relation to postmodern theory, it is in fact, an Enlightenment notion of

ethics that he describes, in which things-in-themselves are accessible to individuals only through language.

John Clifford and Janet Ellerby coauthor an article in 1997 that appears to support Johannesen's figuring of ethics as critique. The authors begin with the assumption – grounded in postmodern theory – that "that there are no ethical absolutes, that one's ethical beliefs are contextual" (10). At the same time, Clifford and Ellerby contend that these same un-grounded and contextual beliefs are "worth fighting for," which they call a "postmodern paradox" that "students should confront" (10). This confrontation takes the form of ethical critique of the "rules, roles, and regulations" of discourse, which Clifford and Ellerby locate in the form of interdisciplinary power struggles (Johannesen 239). The authors explain that they "position ethics as a series of interpretations and conventions agreed upon through a discursive power struggle within disciplinary cultures" and that through ethical practice "writing students can understand rhetorical and thematic choices more contextually, and be aware of the complex and intimate connection between rhetoric, society, and power" (10). Thus, Clifford and Ellerby reinforce the usefulness of ethics as an instrument of critique, which they ask students to apply to academic discourse to explore how language reveals underlying value assumptions, and by doing this, students might become better readers of culture.

Spellmeyer, writing elsewhere and contemporaneously, presents an opposing view. "Rather than producing tolerance," Spellmeyer writes, "the ascent of cultural studies in English has given us the warrant to indict our fellow citizens – especially the ones held captive in our classes – as incompetent readers, as victims of mystification, or as psychological casualties" ("Culture" 292). This complaint follows from English

departments staffed with "preeminent readers of texts" who "feel entitled to deliver masterly readings of everything from child-rearing to nuclear science" ("Culture" 292). Such expert readers and notions of reading, for Spellmeyer, results in "worsening the present climate of cynicism and violence," by making it increasingly more difficult for students "to feel more fully at home in the world" ("Culture" 296). This is because students are constantly reminded of their incompetency; thus, at root, writing ethics is, for Spellmeyer, a practice of self-autonomy. Spellmeyer writes:

> What we haven't seen anywhere is the genuine democratization of control over the affairs of daily life, including the production of knowledge. Among those who "really matter," almost no one has proposed that ordinary people have the intelligence and wisdom necessary for self-rule. Small wonder then, that higher education operates as it does. ("Culture" 293)

Spellmeyer's ethics are necessarily political and aim at real effects in the world. He writes: "Unless we can respond to [students'] basic human needs – the need for hope, for self-respect, and for agency – all our efforts will end only by worsening" things ("Culture" 296). For Spellmeyer, people inherently possess the capacity to make good decisions. People are smart enough to figure it out, and so they should be granted autonomy, or, in another register, *freedom*. When a writing pedagogy positions an authority (for example, moral authority – deferring to "good" grammar, "good" spelling, etc.) above writers – this is Cooper's criticism, too – a hierarchy reflecting the owner/worker relationship strikes up. In this sense, Spellmeyer provides a critique of Clifford and Ellerby's apparent Cartesian assumptions, since it their dualist rationalism rooted in Cartesian thinking which initially presents the difficulty in the classroom by

importing hierarchy. Instead, Spellmeyer suggests, "precisely because 'culture' [what it means to be educated, cultured] has meant different things at different historical moments, we need to watch the way the word gets used strategically, to the advantage of some and to the detriment of others" ("Culture" 292). In sum, when writing teachers present the insights of cultural and literary theory as revealing something previously hidden through their expert reading (see Johannesen; Felski), they disempower students, and worse, estrange students from the knowledge they arrived in the classroom with. For Spellmeyer, writing ethics requires teachers assume not only student agency but also student capacities to pose and address important questions about texts and culture.

Not unlike Spellmeyer, Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan M. Hunter are sensitive to the manner in which key terms are deployed for strategic purposes by pointing to another overused and ill-defined term: *ethics*. Fontaine and Hunter explain in the introduction to their collection, *Foregrounding Ethical Awareness in Composition and English Studies*, that ethics has "taken on different shades of meaning in relation to the historical, philosophical, and even the personal and professional moments in which it has been used" (1). Fontaine and Hunter capitalize on the indeterminacy of the term to organize the collected essays around what they identify as a tripartite conceptual shift in the meaning of ethics to composition studies. Fontaine and Hunter foreground the shift that begins by "creating and providing systems that ensure ethical behavior," move on to "creating environments that will promote the awareness necessary for ethical reflection," and finally, they explore pedagogies which aim to provide "an epistemology to which the essential qualities of ethical exigency are central" (Fontaine and Hunter 5). Or put simply,

the book tracks the transformation they register in writing pedagogies, "from teaching ethical behavior to adopting an ethical awareness" (Fontaine and Hunter 5).

Fontaine and Hunter reportedly take up the project in response to a shift in the "ethical awareness" of the profession they observe, noting that they themselves and many of their associates had begun to pause and to take "stock of their values and their obligations to one another, to students, and to the profession" (5; cf. Morgan). They attribute this need to reflect on "values" and "obligations" to the challenge postmodern theory poses writing pedagogy: "Ethical awareness has moved to the foreground in Composition and English studies at least in part because the postmodern, epistemological climate gives rise to both disciplinary reassessment and context-sensitive judgment" (Fontaine and Hunter 7). For the authors, taking stock of values focused them on the need to update disciplinary notions of writing ethics. Fontaine and Hunter write: "The goal of ethical systems, then, is no longer to evaluate or solve situations or to focus on resolution and completion; instead the goal of ethical systems is to clarify, diagnose, and structure situations" (7). The authors clearly emphasize the role of ethics in clarifying, diagnosing, and structuring the site of writing, by foregrounding Porter's sympathetic description of writing ethics as providing "a heuristic for exploring competing values" (Porter qtd. in Fontaine and Hunter 8). Thus, Fontaine and Hunter frame the essays they collect on writing ethics as "a lens or a process of inquiry," a mode of questioning "through which to scrutinize professional issues and relationships" (8).

The following year (1999), writing in the introduction to another landmark text in writing ethics: *Ethical Issues in College Writing*, edited by Fredric G. Gale, Phillip Sipiora, and James L. Kinneavy, David Bleich presents a counterpoint to Fontaine and

Hunter's analytical vision of ethics. Bleich writes: "Essays in this volume are struggling

with this transition toward an ethical style of speaking and writing that preserves the

habits of speaking about real people in living situations, without rendering these people

as 'Other' and without feeling obliged to declare artificial solidarities with them" (xvi).

Bleich's emphasis on the encounter with the Other sits very close to Cooper's pedagogy,

and Young's ethics of difference modeled on urban living; however, the notion of ethics

as a critical apparatus facilitating inquiry is notably absent from his summation. This

points, for me, to an emerging gap between those who figure ethics as an instrument of

analysis and practical judgment (for example, those engaged with ethics from the

direction of research methodology and professionalization) and those scholars who view

ethics as intertwined with rhetorical and epistemological considerations.

Kathleen Ethel Welch, writing in an essay in the collection Bleich introduces,

stakes out a position that appears to support a view of ethics and rhetoric as inextricably

entwined. In her essay, Welch attributes what she calls the "deprofessionalization" of

college writing programs to the effects of pedagogies that espouse an amoral view of

rhetoric. Welch writes: "All writing and indeed all language use are inherently ethics-

laden and inherently rhetorical," which means that "these writing programs and teachers

are in fact teaching ethics. They are teaching ethics badly. If this issue were more widely

recognized in our universities, then the deprofessionalization of writing pedagogy could

not take place" (137). Assumedly, Welch does not take issue with ethics taught as an

analytical apparatus, such as Fontaine and Hunter forward, since this is an explicit

foregrounding of ethics in the writing classroom, but the problem remains as to the

degree that the ethics taught in the writing classroom are inflected with postmodern theory.

Ethics as Barometer

In "Ethics as Barometer," David L. Wallace pauses to survey the degree to which composition scholarship had begun to take stock, in Fontaine and Hunter's terms, of their values and obligations in relation to the perceived challenges of postmodern theory. Indeed, Wallace judges the degree to which a writing pedagogy has assimilated to postmodern theory and the degree to which ethical theory has been put into practice by the extent to which a writing pedagogy moves "to a view of ethics as a lens or process of inquiry" (111). Wallace's ethics "barometer" measures "the extent to which discussions of postmodern and critical theory have been translated into specific issues that challenge composition theorists, researchers, and practitioners" (111).

Of particular interest to Wallace are "issues of representation and equity" – specifically, what "we as a discipline see as the ethical issues we face, and how we represent ourselves and others in those situations" (111; see also Lunsford xi–xv). For Wallace, disciplinary requirements around representation provide "insight into the extent to which we have embraced or failed to embrace the transformative potential of postmodern and critical theory" (111). Wallace's barometer introduces a selective view of writing ethics as concerned with "representation" and "equity," which are two somewhat mutually exclusive goals of feminist ethics, that overlook the "transformative potential" of postmodern theory as composition scholars have applied it to writing pedagogies based on virtue and character education. Wallace, instead, appears to see the transformative potential of postmodern theory as specific to research and professionalization

applications, which will become more clear as I take up research from this direction on the next chapter.

Virtue Ethics and Patchwriting

A composition scholar who complicates my reading of Wallace's "ethics barometer" is Christy Friend, by reminding me that virtue has historically been linked to conservative notions of moral education. Friend writes against virtue and character education in writing pedagogy on the grounds that such approaches tend to presuppose "a finite, fixed set of universal virtues essential for productive, moral citizenship" (18). Of particular concern for Friend is the degree to which language practices are presupposed to indicate moral character. The result of the centering of discourse in virtue and character in pedagogy has been to figure the "endpoint" of education as a "moral education" – "language, they believe – and especially traditional didactic texts like fables, folk tales, legends, and aphorisms – is a primary and compelling transmitter of social values" (Friend 19). At its most reductive, such perspectives espouse a logic that "when people are exposed to the right kinds of cultural texts, they develop virtues; when exposed to the wrong kind, they are corrupted (19). This is reminiscent of William Bennett's "use of the term 'moral literacy' to denote the endpoint of moral education," which is for Friend, an entirely unproductive way to incorporate morality and ethics into the writing classroom (Friend 19).

In contradistinction, Friend suggests that "as teachers we can and should work to enrich popular conversions about what it means to be just and responsible users of language" (17). And a reductive, "moral literacy" in which students are presented exemplar texts intended to inculcate readers to the accepted values of a community is not,

for Friend, a "just" and "responsible" use of language. Neither is the "common assumption that permeates ethical debate" in composition studies where "nearly everyone who talks about morality assumes that it is closely linked to language, and especially to public discourse" (Friend 16). Rather, Friend notes: "It has become commonplace for people in our field to identify rhetorical education as a primary vehicle for moral and political education […] and for theorists across English studies to insist that both reading and writing necessarily have ethical dimensions" (17). Thus, Friend urges compositionists to find ways to center ethics in writing instruction that do not revert to older models of moral education.

An example of how postmodern theory might help compositionists re-imagine entrenched tenants of a traditional moral education arrives in 2000 with Rebecca Moore Howard. Howard contributes an article to Michael A. Pemberton's collection, *The Ethics of Writing Instruction*, which raises yet another moral issue that has dominated much of the popular discourse around writing ethics: plagiarism. Howard takes issue with the term *plagiarism* functioning as a "category under the larger heading called 'academic dishonesty,'" under which "we establish an ethical basis for highly disparate textual practices" (85). At stake, for Howard, is that by establishing an ethical basis for the textual strategy she calls "patchwriting," the notion of plagiarism operates as an instrument of exclusion" (Howard 85). When the immorality (i.e., academic dishonesty) of plagiarism is emphasized in the writing classroom, students come to view writing ethics reductively – as a code-of-conduct that serves to protect established authors from student plagiarist. Howard explains:

The criminalization of patchwriting is one way in which composition instruction that would appear to empower its students actually prevents their learning, for it would deprive them of a key strategy for learning the language of and gaining entry into an academic discipline. Not only to criminalize patchwriting but to "humanely" respond to it not with punishment but with instruction in citation only furthers that cause, for it deprives students of the instruction they actually need: instruction in how to understand unfamiliar source texts. (86)

Thus, the practice of "patchwriting does, indeed, point to an ethical domain" for Howard – "the ethics of the teacher" (87). Howard suggests that rather than resting behind their moral vantage, writing instructors might instead teach "students to use patchwriting productively and then to move beyond it," which requires writing pedagogy go beyond mere citation instruction (87).

Howard calls for teachers to "actually enact and facilitate, empowering pedagogy that we declare ourselves engaged in, rather than replicating the hierarchical and exclusionary agenda that our cultural history has given us" (87). For Howard, then, "plagiarism is, indeed, an issue of ethics," but in the case of patchwriting, "it is an issue of teachers' ethics, an issue of whether we will or will not engage in pedagogy consonant with our goals" (Howard 87). This idea that writing instruction might reduce complex writing practices to a simple moral imperative (i.e. "thou shall not steal others' writing") has been with college writing instruction since the Civil War in America (see Connors). Howard and Friend remind me that as a composition scholar engaged in updating my image of writing ethics as interpreted through postmodern theory, I must be mindful to import only received practices that are, in fact, "consonant with our goals" (87).

Ethics of Difference

At the turn of the millennium (2000), writing ethics continues to attract a broad range of researchers interested in how moral and ethical assumptions and questions read through postmodern theory might transform writing pedagogy. One consideration of central importance to composition theorists working in feminisms and cultural studies is the issue of difference. In terms of ethics, notions of difference might drive on one end of the continuum toward nominalism, or radical specificity, which has traditionally raised the specter of relativism for some. The other end of this continuum of difference collapses difference into repetition of the same. The following scholars, through their notion of prioritizing difference, suggest how ethics might help.

Included in Pemberton's, *The Ethics of Writing Instruction*, is Myrna Harrienger and Nan Uber-Kellogg's essay "An Ethics of Difference" that describes the "priority of difference" in their pedagogical practices (93). To enact this "priority" in "concrete actions" in the classroom, the authors look to "Bakhtinian ethics" to develop a "stance that privileges the other" (93, 96). This stance is arrived at through "dialogic education," whose end goal is "the interpretive understanding of difference, which comes about through active understanding of the difference of the other," which they promote "through experiential learning" (Harrienger and Uber-Kellogg 101). The authors draw upon Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and enrolement to articulate their image of a "dialogic education" (96). For Bakhtin, "the dialogic relationship is characterized by a stance that privileges the other as an expressive subject and producer of text" (Harrienger and Uber-Kellogg 96). And "to the degree that the relationship is dialogic, this being-toward-the-other functions" as a "condition of possibility for (re)interpretation and

insight" (96). The students engage in dialogic roles (such as speaker or listener) learning to privilege "the other as an expressive subject and producer of text, as well as a voice enroled in and made literate by being listened to" (96). Harrienger and Uber-Kellogg seek to invite students to adopt a receptive stance toward the Other, suggesting "openness to change is itself change" (96). Harrienger and Uber-Kellogg continue: "This dynamic predisposing stance creates an ethical space that is also an action, and bridges the radical distance between self and other" (96). Such a conceptual space is, for the authors, "ethical because it is directed at the good of the other" because a "preference for the other is an ethical one" (Harrienger Uber-Kellogg 96).

<center>Feminist Ethics of Criticism</center>

While Harrienger and Uber-Kellogg translate dialogic theory into concrete classroom practices, other composition scholars have challenged many of the assumptions about the Other that ground the notion of "dialogic education" they forward. One such example arrives in an essay coauthored by Michelle Ballif, Diane Davis, and Roxanne Mountford. The authors foreground the importance of listening to developing what they refer to as an "ethics of criticism" (932). Such an ethics expands the role of the receiver in the dialogic notion forwarded by Harrienger and Uber-Kellogg by assuming a certain opacity of language, and thus, the centrality of hermeneutics to the communication act. In other words, Ballif et al., understand that to listen one must "attempt to acknowledge, address, and attend to [the] interruptions" inherent to any communication event, in "an attempt to negotiate them" (932).

To illustrate how ethical critique works to respect difference, Ballif et al. point to "the feminist community," which they explain "is a fictional body," a "logical

convenience, which, once drawn, constructs a dot-to-dot picture that ignores the abyss of difference that exists between each dot" (932). Central to the role of the listener, then, is the work of the "ethical critic" to attend to "this abyss" (Ballif et al. 932). Ballif et al. apply Lyotard's notion of the *differend* to support their understanding of the "abyss of difference that exists between each dot" and to "to understand the 'nature of maps' and the borders they constitute" (932). The authors suggest that an awareness of the "abyss of difference" and the borders they constitute necessitate an "ethics of criticism" to function as "negotiation" (Ballif et al. 933). When difference is elided, or the spaces that demarcate difference are erased, "the differend is at stake precisely when a limit is taken for granted, when it's no longer doubted or questioned" (Ballif et al. 933). Thus, for the authors, "negotiation itself implies a limit-crossing: placing the supposed 'inside' and 'outside' into relation" (Ballif et al. 933). This relation requires an "ethico-political rhetoric rather than political discourse" – to "envision feminism as a way of being rather than a politics" (Ballif et al. 938). In other words, the authors suggest an ethic of critique would, in fact, facilitate "making a connection, of exhibiting an ethos of 'coming together'" (Ballif et al. 938).

<p style="text-align:center">Ethics and Listening</p>

In the same year (2000), Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham publish an interview with the philosopher and cultural theorist, Judith Butler, in which Butler also takes up listening. Butler writes: "What concerns me is that this impulse – which I consider to be important to critical thinking and to an openness to what is new – has been disparaged by those who believe that we have a certain responsibility to write not only in an accessible way, but within the terms of already accepted grammar" (732). For Butler, the notion of a

received grammar is particularly problematic because it represents a series of moral assumptions that are assumed as norms, and as such, these normative, moral boundaries act upon "all kinds of people who for whatever reason are not immediately captured or legitimated by the available norms and who live with the threat of violence or the threat of unemployment or the threat of dispossession of some kind by virtue of their aberrant relation to the norm" (Olson and Worsham 754). In other words, when we limit our communication to received grammar, we limit our answers to "a given horizon of possibilities that are already established – what is imaginable" (Olson and Worsham 763). To operate in this register does not allow adequately for self-making by limiting responses to the question "who are you" to recognizable answers: a girl, a teacher, *etc*. For Butler, legibility prescriptions necessarily foreclose on future responses. In other words, moral codes reified and naturalized today determine the range of possible responses available to future subjects. Thus, Butler argues for a proliferation of possible responses by asking: "How ought we to live and what possibilities should we collectively seek to realize?" outside the "given horizon of possibilities that are already established – what is imaginable" (Olson and Worsham 763).

<div align="center">The Subject of Ethics and Morality</div>

Of particular interest to my project is the image of morality and ethics Butler makes possible. Morality is received as law or codes – I am "compelled by norms that I do not choose" (Butler qtd. in Olson and Worsham 752). Whereas, my performance relates to ethics – "what is imaginable?" In other terms, what freedoms exists? How much agency do I have in making my "self" in writing? For Butler, the intersections of moral and ethical operations constitute the subject – compose the "I." Butler writes:

I work within the norms that constitute me. I do something with them. Those

norms are the condition of my agency, and they also limit my agency; they are

that limit and that condition at the same time. What I can do is, to a certain extent,

conditioned by what is available for me to do within the culture and by what other

practices are and by what practices are legitimating. (qtd. in Olson and Worsham

752)

In this sense, norms are not necessarily repressive because it is in observance or

defiance of normative requirements upon the subject that create the conditions for

agency. Thus, Butler advocates for a proliferation of "legitimating" practices – to extend

the range of legitimate grammatical constructions. Butler points to her reading of

Friedrich Nietzsche to suggest how such a reflexivity might become possible: "I only

begin to think about myself as an object when I am asked to be accountable for

something I have done, that the question of accountability is actually what inaugurates

reflexivity" (Olson and Worsham 749). Thus, Butler returns us to the notion of

accountability forwarded by Cooper through her reading of Foucault's later works. It is

this notion of accountability that will characterize much of the writing scholarship that

will follow from the direction of writing theory.

<div align="center">Language as Ethical Engine</div>

Michael Bernard-Donals adds to the notion of accountability I am developing

here, writing in the 2009 "Guest Editor's Introduction" of a special issue of the *Journal of*

Advanced Composition (JAC) taking up the ethical philosophy of Emmanual Levinas.

Bernard-Donals writes: "Language – not just what we say or write, but the compulsion to

speak or write that comes as a result of our proximity to others – is coincident with, and

not a result of, engagement" ("Guest" 478). In other words, the "I" comes into being in relation to an Other – the Other is the ontological condition of one's being. This leads Bernard-Donals to suggest "language is an ethical engine" which drives the subject forward into new relationships characterized by a "compulsion to speak or write" in "proximity to others." For Bernard-Donals, the field of ethics is the "terrain" of the engagement with an Other ("Guest" 478). But he expands the terrain in the "sense that our reason and our material being (our bodies) cannot be separated from one another, and that our minds and our bodies cannot be separated from the materiality of others and of the objects in the world in which we live" ("Guest" 490). Bernard-Donals succeeds, on my reading, in forwarding an externalist view of rhetoric in that there is nothing exterior to the ethical engagement that constitutes self and Other in the context of language. "We are," writes Bernard-Donals, responsible for ourselves because we are responsible for the others who make us what we are. This is not a comfortable place for us, or for rhetoric, to be left," Bernard-Donals writes, "but it's the only place we've got" ("Guest" 490).

<div align="center">Curator Comments: Referencing Totality</div>

In this section of the catalog of writing ethics I highlight the work of compositionists who have turned toward ethics, in part, to expand received models of the writing situation. Their engagement with ethics links the writing situation outward toward the greater material, social, and cultural ecologies in which it emerges. This embedded and situated notion of writers and writing returns me once again to Cooper's early and prescient ecological model of writing in which she updates earlier "sea charts" of the writing situation by relating the writing context to totality (Jameson 90).

By situating the writing model in larger social, cultural, historical considerations, Cooper points to the impossibility of extracting writers or writing from the ecosystem in which they are found. In this sense, Cooper creates a model of writing that is able to absorb the lessons of postmodern theory and postmodern ethics as they are articulated by the researchers who follow. Composition scholars are able to layer cognitive, affective, ideological, political, discursive, and technological aspects on Cooper's model precisely because of her innovative link to totality (the ecosystem). That is, by situating the writing situation in the context of larger systems, Cooper makes ethics – as the maintenance of relations of being – a fundamental concern for writers and writing by indicating the situated writer's relation to totality. Butler takes this much further in her ethics, writing:

> The ethical does not primarily describe conduct or disposition, but characterizes a way of understanding the relational framework within which sense, action and speech become possible. The ethical describes a structure of address in which we are called upon to act or respond in a specific way. (*Senses* 12)

In other words, ethics describes, to use Bernard-Donals' terms, "the compulsion to speak or write that comes as a result of our proximity to others" ("Guest" 478). Which is to say, as Butler does elsewhere in reference to ethical subjectivity, "no one transcends the matrix of relations that gives rise to the subject; no one acts without first being formed as one with the capacity to act" (*Senses* 8). Thus, teaching writing necessarily implies teaching writing ethics.

I am reminded of the importance of Berlin's work exploring ideology and writing pedagogy. I don't think I overstate it when I suggest his suggestion that "every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology" changes fundamentally the nature of teaching (492). Here I

explore the implications of understanding ideology as enforcing an underlying moral system – "a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed" (Berlin 492). A model of writing, for me, must consider well the complexity and interdependency of the systems and ecosystems in which it emerges.

Returning to writing as the practice of freedom, the proximity of ideology and morality is a critical point, which makes the practice of ethics in the writing classroom all-the-more important. If morality is a major investment underwriting ideology, and we understand ideology as imbricated in the teaching of writing, then it is clear that a model of the writing situation as isolated or distanced from morality and ethics is insufficient (Berlin 492).

I also see in this collection a growing concern for the ways human actions are "structured and normalized" through discourse (Berlin 479). For Berlin, it is central pedagogical concern and foregrounded in the writing classroom. Stotsky criticizes Berlin for leaving out manners, asserting that "our intellectual work includes our academic manners as well as our academic mores" (Stotsky 795). In contradistinction to Stotsky's emphasis on manner in the construction and performance of academic identities, Spellmeyer takes issue with constructionists for idealizing notions of discourse communities and for failing to fully account for the agency of writing and writers – overemphasizing, in the end, social determination. Spellmeyer favors a Foucauldian image of knowledge "as an activity rather than a body of information" ("Foucault" 715).

Once I understand knowledge as "doing knowledge," I begin to see the need for ethics, for example, researchers follow ethical protocols, but also to account for rhetorical

action itself. That is how I ended up teaching writing aside from ethics. Traditionally, ethical considerations are tucked away under the umbrella of rhetoric as *ethos*, but *ethos* is insufficient in scale and scope to support writing as an ethical practice. My contention, then, is a rhetorical-ethics or a ethical-rhetoric are both insufficient as long as one term is privileged over another; rather, to practice writing as an ethical practice, writing, rhetoric, and ethics must be weighted equally.

Writing as the practice of freedom may require writers discover and understand, in Stotsky's terms, "academic manners" and "academic mores," but rather than master them through a strategy of assimilation, I suggest these moral horizons might be tested (Stotsky 795). Spellmeyer suggests the openings to rewrite the social occur in transgressive acts, resistance and rule breaking – creative responses when individuals reach a limit of orderly (moral) discourse, where one encounters "a 'discontinuity,' […] a point of intersection between divergent interests, channels, and communities," and yet, must self-fashion an "I" capable of entering into that discourse ("Foucault" 720). Thus, central to my practice of teaching writing as an ethical practice is the notion that writing necessarily seek to tactically and strategically violate received codes. I don't mean to suggest "bad" grammar is necessarily ethical; rather, I suggest writing as an ethical practice might prioritize both means and ends. That is, the ethical practice of writing is transgressive (means) while at the same moment attending to the goals (ends) of the communication. But all this conceptual framework is for naught, as Spellmeyer cautions his readers: "Unless we can respond to [students'] basic human needs – the need for hope, for self-respect, and for agency – all our efforts will end only by worsening" things ("Culture" 296). Perhaps, then, sharing hooks' concern for the "well-being" of the

"whole" human beings in our classrooms, might be a good starting point for an ethical

writing pedagogy (hooks 15, 14).

CHAPTER 4: ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Everyone is someone else's 'Other.'

Mary Gentile qtd. in Ellsworth

Chapter 4 documents the ethical turn in English studies driven by the scholarship and leadership efforts of writing researchers interested in innovative research methodologies. Ellen Cushman, Andrea Lunsford, and Peter Mortensen are among the luminaries arriving at ethics from the direction of writing research and professionalization. The scholarship I review demonstrates how qualitative research practices adopted from social sciences and anthropology help to drive interest in ethics as researchers seek to design more ethical studies by developing more reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations with their research subjects. Also considered here are efforts to professionalize the field of composition studies and to assert a leadership, or at least influential, position in institutional research settings.

Ethics of Representation

The so called ethical turn of composition studies emerges in the mid 1990s, along the "contact zones" of writing research where increased interest in qualitative methods of writing research focuses attention on student-teacher and subject-researcher relationships – chiefly feminist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial critique (see Kahn "Putting"; see also Miller; Pratt). Fueled by this interest, writing research scholarship and professionalization pedagogies drive much of the resurgence of writing ethics through the 1990s. Innovative teacher-researchers drive this interest by adopting qualitative research methods developed elsewhere in academe (see Bissex; Brodkey; Flower and Hayes; Heath; Myers; Perl and Wilson). In the 1980s, however, as composition teacher-

researchers interested in innovative methodologies began designing ethnographies, case studies, and other studies, there was little in the field to draw upon.

Wendy Bishop, for example, notes that when she started her writing research in 1986, ethnography had no clear "methodological authority in composition studies," and other than "a few teacher-researcher articles," researchers had to look to the social sciences and anthropology for "studies to study" (147). As a result, Bishop reports that at that time she felt she "was inventing ethnography" on her own (147). Bishop explains "the methods texts" she did have "were valuable" in that they explained "how to design research and collect data – how to 'write it down'" and she "scoured them for hints on ways to adapt my borrowed methodology to my own field, writing research" (148).

While working on her dissertation, which she completed in 1988, Bishop reads anthropologist Clifford Geertz, and is startled by Geertz's claim "that 'writing it down'" is "in fact an interpretive act" (qtd. In Bishop 148). Bishop explains she assumed "the data I collected would be representative, reliable, whole," that "scrupulous careful analysis, triangulation, and constant self-questioning would bring me to a reliable and valid understanding of college writing" (148–9). However, while compiling her 600+ page dissertation, Bishop comes to understand that, "all research methods and research reports are rhetorical," and more startlingly, "that all research relies on persuasion, including ethnography" (149). Bishop writes: "How could research that seemed more and more to rely on my subjectivity, interpretations, and, finally, storytelling skills be a vehicle for reliable and valid results?" (148). Thus, Bishop, like many writing researchers, arrives at writing ethics after she begins to question received research methods.

While Bishop describes the discomforting realization of the rhetorical nature of "all" research, Andrea A. Lunsford, another early adopter of qualitative research methods in writing research, describes how reflecting upon her own research methods led her to question the assumptions of research, and in particular, research ethics. Writing in 1995, Lunsford describes her earlier assumptions:

> While I cared deeply for students and for their writing, while I worried a great deal over how (or whether) I could be of help to them, and while I thought of my stance as grounded in an ethical system I could defend and live by, I did not fret about appropriation, about erasure, about (mis)representation in my role as teacher researcher. ("Foreword" vii)

Reminiscent of Bishop, Lunsford reports that she "began to question" her "all-too-easy assumptions," which led her to seek "to write differently, to teach differently, to conduct research differently, and to teach 'methods' differently" ("Foreword" vii).

Lunsford arrives at ethics by reflecting on her research methodology. Her critical ethical reflections ask "how to represent the subjects" of research given the rhetorical nature of research practice, that is, the necessity of interpretation and the "risk of linguistic expression" ("Foreword" xi). Lunsford suggests that while "writing is always an act of composing, of representing," it is also a risk we must take ("Foreword" xv). The question is, then, how best to represent the subject(s) of writing research? For me, Lunsford, like Bishop, suggests the "right" way to conduct research is with the knowledge that "all" research is rhetorical and language representative. Put another way, research boils down in some degree to interpretation – especially when we employ

qualitative methods. This ethical presumption will bring many writing researchers to contend with ethics in their research methodology and professionalization pedagogies.

The ethical turn in composition studies is sounded in 1995 with the publication of Peter Mortensen and Gesa E. Kirsch's *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy* (xxi).[9] As the essays they collect suggest, by 1995 qualitative scholarship was well into an ethical turn. This turn was, in large, driven by methodological concerns and a shared desire to standardize research practices to allay increasing institutional oversight. Mortensen and Kirsch represent a key milestone in the movement that will eventually result in an official Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) position statement: "CCCC Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies."

I transition now to consider ethics in terms of discourse communities and literacy research to more directly consider ethical questions raised in literacy research.

Ethics and Discourse Communities

Many composition scholars interested in writing research and professionalization pedagogies embrace the discourse community communication model. The concept is first articulated in terms of a speech community in 1982 by sociolinguist Martin Nystrand, but the sense of the term as it is understood by most composition scholarship is developed by the American linguist, John Swales (Nystand 1–26; Swales 21–32). For Swales,

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[9] Ellen Barton provides a slightly different timeline for the ethical turn in composition research. Barton writes: "Although Quintilian set an ethical stance of "a good man speaking well" early on for rhetoric, the field of composition studies arguably began its contemporary ethical turn with the publication of *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research* in 1992 (Kirsch and Sullivan), with Kirsch suggesting in her chapter that the field take up the feminist principles advanced by Sondra Harding to reflexively consider research relationships, research questions, and research agendas" ("Further Contributions" 597).

schematically, a discourse community is a "specific interest group" with "common public goals" who use writing to achieve these ends (24–5). The notion is helpful for understanding how writing and discourse is constructed socially and has since become part of the core, shared vocabulary of composition scholarship. Less well known, perhaps, is that Swales acknowledges in the same article that despite "his attempt to offer a set of pragmatic and operational criteria," his notion of discourse community is "somewhat removed from reality" and "utopian" in that it does not adequately capture the "tensions, discontinuities and conflicts" that characterize "the sorts of talk and writing that go on everyday" (Swales 32). Nonetheless, Kurt Spellmeyer, writing at roughly the same time, represents composition scholarship critical of the utopian ethics underwriting notions of discourse community.

Spellmeyer, responding in 1990 to a pair of terse comments about his monograph, *Common Ground*, from Charles Bazerman and Susan Miller, provides two key points of criticism of writing pedagogies that import utopian assumptions about the nature of community. Bazerman and Miller take issue with Spellmeyer's suggestion that communities suppress dissent to falsely represent consensus. This is, on Spellmeyer's view, a utopian view (see also Meyers; Bruffee). The first problem with utopian views of community in academic writing instruction, for Spellmeyer, is an accompanying overemphasis on rules and a tendency to place "an emphasis on methods and standards – on 'conventions'" ("Responds" 335). A focus on conventions implies a static model of knowledge production; however, Spellmeyer suggests a model much more aligned to discourse – writing "to produce knowledge is to change knowledge," to transpose it into a "specific context of a life or lives" ("Responds" 335). In other words, knowledge is

dialogic. For Spellmeyer, contemporaneous views of discourse communities often fail to acknowledge the dialogic process of knowledge production, and as a result, serve to obscure "both the historical character of knowledge and its openness to the present" ("Responds" 335). This results, Spellmeyer observes, in emphasizing the format or *conventions* of communication. Spellmeyer writes, "the reduction of practice to methods and standards flatly contradicts the account of knowledge as dialogue," and if "knowledge is dialogical only on certain occasions or only to a certain degree, then it is not dialogical at all" ("Responds" 335).

For Spellmeyer, writing pedagogies that presume utopian ideas about discourse communities (or communities in general) are unethical in that they exclude the students they claim to reward. Spellmeyer criticizes Miller on these grounds, suggesting that Miller "speaks to our pragmatic concern for students who have yet to find a voice within the university" but many of the "communities" in the university "will never permit these same students to give voice to the truths of their own lives" – that is, unless the "truth" of their lives adheres to "currently accepted methods and standards," of the community, which is generally not the case ("Responds" 336, 335). Spellmeyer develops this criticism in regard to Bazerman, writing:

> While Bazerman invites students to see themselves as members in good standing
> of the general community of readers and thinkers, his conception of their actual
> role in the discourses of the academy implicitly withholds from them the full
> rights and privileges of membership which are not open to negotiation, at least to
> negotiation involving students. ("Responds" 335)

Here, then, Spellmeyer points to a fundamental ethical dilemma of academic discourse communities. When compositionists model academic writing on notions of community founded on utopian assumptions of participation and access to "full rights and privileges of membership" beyond the reach of most students, then these pedagogies are, in fact, setting students up for failure ("Responds" 335).

Spellmeyer's exchange between Bazerman and Miller illustrates the dialogic process in which methods and concepts imported from outside the discipline (here, linguistics) are continually transformed in composition scholarship through the ongoing interaction of classroom practices and reflective practices. As compositionists put novel ideas and research methods into practice in writing classrooms, they begin to transform these practices to better reflect what scholars know about writers and writing. This transformative process of reflection and revision represent, for me, the best of composition scholarship. And this adoption and adaption process is, for me, what makes composition studies a valuable site for the emergence of ethics – best put by compositionist, Ellen Barton, who writes in 2008: "Our field can make important contributions to the understanding of ethics based on our critical perspective on language as rhetorical and our multiple methods of analyzing the language of ethics as it actually takes place in particular contexts and decision-making interactions" ("Further" 599).

Elsewhere, compositionist Bernard-Donals suggests that language acts like an "ethical engine," generating ethical questions inviting judgement through the act of communication ("Guest" 479). If ethical choices, then, are implied in the everyday acts of communication, then ethics is a central concern of rhetoric. This is close to what Aristotle refers to as *phroneisis* – everyday know-how, or practical wisdom. Practical wisdom as

ethical judgment and rhetorical action forms the basis for the approach that many early researchers and scholars adopt. These scholars then put theory and method to test in the context of a well-established disciplinary regime of reflective practices as Bishop and Lunsford demonstrate.

In 1995, Louise Wetherbee Phelps and Janet Emig demonstrate this phenomenon from the other direction, showing how ethical presumptions about teaching writing may also provide an "engine" to transform received knowledge into new theories about practice. In the introduction to their collection of essays, Phelps and Emig explain they "had been attracted into composition and rhetoric in part on ethical grounds," and specifically, in the belief that "all teaching possesses a moral dimension" (xv). Phelps and Emig represent the "moral dimension" of writing instruction as an "ethical transaction with the learner," one that demands "responsibility, scrupulosity, and nurture" (xv). This ethical presumption of Phelps and Emig is the starting point for theorizing a more egalitarian writing classroom, which they then work toward in their classroom practice. Thus, the (moral) values grounding their practice lead Phelps and Emig to theorize a more egalitarian classroom practice, requiring "serious, courteous, and equitable treatment of all persons" across all identity "categories" (Phelps and Emig xv). The question I would pose this approach is whether such inclusivity successfully addresses or stubbornly ignores Spellmeyer's skepticism toward the concept of community.

The Ethical Turn in Composition Studies

The composition literature leading up to the 1996 publication of Mortensen and Kirsch's *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy* demonstrates a growing interest in ethics by scholars working with research methodologies and

professionalization pedagogies. This interest is driven in part by researchers designing

qualitative literacy studies investigating writers in the social and physical environments

in which they are situated rather than isolated or staged research settings (see Doheny-

Farina; Emig; Haas and Flower). Mortensen and Kirsch describe their landmark

collection, *Ethics and Representation,* as an attempt to "bring into public view the many

kinds of ethical and representational quandaries researchers tend too often to keep to

themselves (xxiii). Notably, Mortensen and Kirsch suggest writing research scholarship

has made an ethical turn while pointing to the gap in composition scholarship exploring,

specifically, how questions of representation, complicated by postmodern theory, effect

writing research. For me, the collection represents a milestone moment in writing ethics

by addressing the gap in writing research scholarship regarding "questions of

representation, voice, and subjectivity" in "qualitative research" (Mortensen and Kirsch

xxiv).

Mortensen and Kirsch report *Ethics and Representation* arrives "as a consequence

of "feminist interventions" and encounters with "poststructural and postcolonial

theorists," and also as an alternative to "a kind of ethical relativism" linked to some

"postmodern theories of culture" (xxi). Their stated intention is to surface some

methodological assumptions in human (writer) research in order to facilitate a discussion

of "the complex ethical and representational questions […] rarely discussed in research

manuals" (xxii). The subsequent discussion does eventually culminate a few years later in

the release of an official Conference on College Composition and Communication

(CCCC) statement on research ethics. In 1996, however, when Mortensen and Kirsch

strike up the conversation, they issue a stern warning that writing research, despite

enjoying a surge in interest, is falling behind: "Composition scholars need to develop a

sophisticated understanding of the methodological, ethical, and representational

complexities in their research, understanding similar to that in fields where such

discussions already have a considerable history" (xxx).[10]

　　　Of interest here is the degree to which Mortensen and Kirsch sit at an intersection

of competing urges. On the one hand is "the urgency to fix hard standards of reliability,

validity, and generalizability," and on the other is the assumption that "interpretation is

central to all research, that researchers' values permeate and shape research questions,

observations, and conclusions, and that there can be no value-neutral research

methodology" (Mortensen and Kirsch xxi). In other words, postmodern theory and

rhetorical models of knowledge production collide with qualitative methods adopted from

earlier positivists models. This is, for my purposes, a particularly rich site of tension. For

example, Mortensen and Kirsch arrive at ethics in an effort to reconcile "basic ethical

principles," such as "feminist research should aim to validate and improve women's

lives, not simply observe and describe them," with received ethnographic practices,

which espouse a neutral, scientific approach to researcher-subject relations (xxi). In other

words, as writing researchers move out of controlled spaces and into the world at large to

study writing, they encounter feminist, poststructuralist, and postcolonialist critiques of

"positivist" methodological assumptions, which occasions ethical and methodological

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[10] In a footnote, the authors explain that before their volume appears, "published work on research methods in composition either prescribes how projects ought to be designed (e.g., Lauer and Asher's *Composition Research: Empirical Designs*) or critiques already completed research studies (e.g., North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition)* (Mortensen and Kirsch xxx). In contradistinction, the authors divide the fourteen collected essays "in three sections that address, in order, ethical dilemmas in qualitative research; questions of representation, voice, and subjectivity; and the nature of institutional and social contexts" (Mortensen and Kirsch xxiv).

reflection in the scholarship. This turn in composition scholarship toward ethics in the 1990s begins to interrogate received notions of the researcher-subject relationship, as well as researcher responsibilities to the community in which their research takes place. Thus, writing scholars begin to explore issues of reciprocity and care in research, as well as address imperial and colonial critiques of qualitative research from postcolonial and postmodern theory (cf. Kahn, "Putting" 186–7). As a consequence of their own feminist interventions, Mortensen and Kirsch "come to recognize how hierarchies and inequalities (marked by gender, race, class, social groupings, and more) are transferred onto and reproduced within participant-researcher relations" (xxi–ii). This realization becomes, for Mortensen and Kirsch, all the more important because of the growing interest in innovative qualitative methods in writing research marked by a lagging interest in research ethics. Mortensen and Kirsch write:

> Teacher research on writing – largely qualitative in nature – is finally receiving its due notice, professionally and institutionally. Yet, despite the popularity in qualitative research, scholars in composition studies are only beginning to examine the informing assumptions of this work: assumptions that, when analyzed, yield difficult questions about ethics and representation that demand our consideration. (xix)

<div align="center">Writing Professionalization Pedagogies</div>

While Mortensen and Kirsch arrive at ethics to better consider the relationship between researcher and the human research subject, Michael A. Pemberton turns toward ethics in theorizing changes he observes in basic assumptions about writing instruction. Pemberton begins with the observation that "many of our perceptions about society,

literacy, pedagogy, and writing have changed," highlighting the "multicultural, multiethnic, multipolitical, multisituated, and multidisciplinary nature of writing instruction" (x). While welcoming a more diverse view of writing and writers, Pemberton suggests that such a view has "complicated discussions of the ethics or communally sanctioned ethical values that might be embraced by instructors and/ or passed on to students" (x). For Pemberton, "this same diversity argues all the more strongly for a careful examination of the ethical concerns that are becoming more and more central to writing instruction" (x). This is a gap Pemberton intends to address through the publication of his collection, *The Ethics of Writing Instruction: Issues in Theory and Practice* in 2000.

Pemberton reminds his readers that "ethics and writing instruction" have a "long and enduring history" (ix). The "ultimate goal of many classical educational systems" for example, those "designed and advocated by Cicero (*De Oratore*) and Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*)" was "the construction of the ethical rhetor, motivated by the spirit of *civitas* to employ rhetoric for worthy and socially beneficial ends" (ix). It is in this spirit that Pemberton raises questions about how writing pedagogies might "construct" students who might "employ rhetoric for worthy and socially beneficial ends" (ix). Like Mortensen and Kirsch, Pemberton wants to reconcile postmodern theory and received practices. To this end, Pemberton writes: "Ethics – like language" is "a distinctly social phenomenon, and as such […] deeply immersed in the complex agendas, plans, programs, and vicissitudes of human interaction" (x). Pemberton arrives at ethics, then, looking to articulate an "ethics of writing instruction" that accounts for social effects and

is "similarly situated, equally complex, and correspondingly problematic" as language practices and the "vicissitudes of human interaction" that compose our everyday lives (x).

Pemberton divides his collection into three sections that move outward from the composition classroom toward the profession at large and the public. This centrifugal organization, together with the essays included, provides the overall effort of *The Ethics of Writing Instruction* appears to want to draw ethics out of theoretical domains and into political arenas. This surfaces an important consideration of ethics for me, which is the proximity of ethics and politics. My sense of this closeness comes from Aristotle, who groups ethics and politics together as practical arts served by *phroneisis* – practical wisdom or know-how. Ethics and politics share in the fact that neither activity "creates" a product (e.g., a speech, a truth) but rather is a facility exercised to get something done, or to achieve a favorable outcome. In the case of ethics, it is something like how might I live a meaningful life? In a political sense, it might be how might we all live together peacefully? Or as Mary Rose O'Reilley asks: "Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?" (x). James Porter suggests "ethics is not a set of answers but a mode of questioning and a manner of positioning" ("Developing" 218). By taking up a position we orient ourselves toward the political. Thus, the counterpart, or perhaps the other side of the coin from ethics is that of politics. Returning to writing pedagogy, then, what is the right balance of ethics and politics in rhetorical practice and the writing classroom?

Politics of Teacher Research

One strand of thought in the literature has sought to center politics in the writing classroom (cf. Berlin; Bizzell, "The Politics"; Ellsworth; Friend, "Ethics"). By

foregrounding politics in their classrooms – including their own politics, these scholars assume there is no disinterested or neutral position one might assume "outside" of politics, and thus, as James Berlin explains, "any examination of a rhetoric must first consider the ways its very discursive structure can be read so as to favor one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions" (477). Underlying any political position, Berlin explains, is an ideological system providing "the language to define the subject (the self), other subjects, the material world, and the relation of all of these to each other" – in short, a worldview (479). Thus, ideology is "inscribed in language practices, entering all features of our experience" (Berlin 479). No other argument is possible, for Berlin, than one already vested in ideological and political interests (478). As Bishop suggests above, the concern that even the most scrupulously designed study cannot escape its rhetorical, ideological, and even political bias, is a central ethical concern for writing researchers.

The political aspects of writing have provided some scholars cause to be optimistic about the power of writing to transform one's social and material circumstances, and thus, to center ethics as a means to examine how politics and ideology are "inscribed in language practices" (Berlin 479; cf. Ellsworth; Mack; LeCourt). Take, for example, Jeffrey Allen Rice, who suggests that "ethics" does not *designate* but rather *signifies* "the very possibility of ideological and political (re)inscription" (152). In other words, writers transform themselves by writing – by calling attention to the discursive nature of lived experience. Thus, for Rice, writing contains the possibility of reinventing oneself – of reorienting oneself toward the world (cf. Bartholomae, "Inventing"). However, overtly political writing pedagogies have garnered some concern over the

ethics of their overt and sometimes agonistic political tactics in the classroom. For example, in one of the essays in Pemberton's collection, John Ruszkiewicz takes issue with Patricia Bizzell's pedagogical goal of centering her own politics in the writing classroom.

Ruszkiewicz begins with a question that rises from an apparent apathy toward politics, asking "Why don't I want to teach politics in my writing classes?" (24). He continues: "Surrounded by faculty and graduate students energized by their progressive pedagogies and committed to a profession that has invented rationales for classroom advocacy for more than a decade, why don't I feel the same tug my colleagues do to use writing courses to change the world?" (24). Ruszkiewicz points to Bizzell to provide an example of a political writing pedagogy, honing in on her comment that she "allows" students to try to persuade her "after claiming the right to turn students toward her worldview" (32).

Ruszkiewicz takes issue with the word "allows," which for him signals that "the teacher holds all the power: she selects the topic to reflect her worldview; she confers the permission to disagree; presumably, she gives out the grades. And so it must be when a teacher makes her class a forum for advancing political views, even in the name of virtue" (Ruszkiewicz 32). Thus, "the great irony of advocacy writing classrooms" Ruszkiewicz writes, is that "they are not political at all, merely politicized – for what is at stake finally seems not to be important civic and social issues, but the instructor's ability to control them" (32). Ruszkiewicz continues: "I fear the highly sophisticated arguments social rhetoricians sometimes make in defense of writing courses shaped from their personal political beliefs come very close to being rationalizations of control represented

as liberation" (33). Ruszkiewicz concludes with the hope that "theorists and practitioners" who center their politics in the writing classroom are at least "occasionally uneasy with their designs" as he is (33).

Ruszkiewicz's reluctance to foreground politics in his classrooms as a teacher-researcher is a position Berlin critiques as a methodological assumption imported from cognitive psychology, which "refuses the ideological question altogether, claiming for itself the transcendent neutrality of science" (478). Berlin's political argument precludes an apolitical pedagogy; however, I think that what is at stake for scholars like Ruszkiewicz who view politics with skepticism is the ethical use of classroom authority. For Ruszkiewicz, Bizzell does not sufficiently evacuate the authority vested in her role as teacher by the institutional setting surrounding the classroom.[11] Bizzell's political classroom, for Ruszkiewicz, is underscored by power privileging her authority – hardly the basis for an ethical classroom politic. A related approach toward the political classroom that might evade some of the criticisms Ruszkiewicz levels at other progressive, political-minded pedagogies is Lunsford's pedagogical emphasis on collaboration and responsibility to others.

In her essay also appearing in Pemberton's collection of essays taking up writing ethics, Lunsford suggests that "at the very least, if we cannot abandon the term 'authority'

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[11] As a middle point between Ruskewicz and Bizzell, I offer Jeff Smith who argues in *College English* (1997) for a utilitarian ethics that seeks to balance student goals, institutional requirements, and critical pedagogical goals, by urging writing instructors to recognize and take responsibility for their role as gatekeepers. Smith explains: "While I disagree with many things about that curriculum, I don't think it's fair to students to whipsaw them between the curriculum's values and my own. I want my efforts to converge, in the end, with the university's. I want what I teach to be good not just for people, not even just for people, not even just for citizens, but for future doctors and lawyers and organic chemistry majors. I am willing, in that sense, to try to make what I teach *useful*" (318–9).

(or if it will not abandon us), perhaps we can alternatively succeed in disentangling it from *power*" ("Refiguring" 75). Lunsford draws upon an earlier essay by Mortensen and Kirsch to describe how power might begin to be "disentangled" from classroom politics by moving "beyond a notion of authority based on autonomy, individual rights, and abstract rules," toward a classroom ideal "based on dialogue, connectedness, and contextual rules" (Mortensen and Kirsch qtd. in Lunsford 66). Lunsford points to what literacy researcher, Anne Gere, terms a *community ethic* to describe her image: "What I have in mind" Lunsford writes, "is putting not authority but *responsibility* at the heart of such an ethic, responsibility in the sense of taking responsibility for words and actions and positions in the classroom, and in the sense of the *ability* to *respond* – respond-ability in the classroom" ("Refiguring" 74). Lunsford suggests the benefits of such an orientation:

> I am thinking, in making such a move, of all those students who identified authority as authority "over" someone or something. Might they think instead of responsibility to, of responsibility for, of responsibility with? If all members of a class agree or contract to take responsibility for their words, actions, and positions – to and with others in the class – then such responsibilities can become the basis for or sites of ongoing negotiation and for the construction of an ethical classroom community. (75)

Lunsford's suggestion that an "ethical classroom community" might be fostered by encouraging students to take responsibility for one's "words, actions, and positions" is fairly well-trafficked idea based on the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas (cf. Bernard-Donals, "Guest"; Cooper, "Postmodern"; Micciche, "Emotion"). However, Lunsford is "not

particularly sanguine about being able to make the move to a classroom ethic based on responsibilities rather than traditional authority, or to disentangle authority" from "power, because such a move cannot occur in and of itself" ("Refiguring" 75).

Lunsford points to three "institutional factors" that she believes interfere with the teacher-researcher's ability to construct new configurations of writing classrooms that challenge traditional notions of power: "The way we use time, the way we use space, and the way we use rewards" ("Refiguring" 75). These aspects suggest the large scale a project to "disentangle" power from the writing classroom must be. Interestingly, however, Lunsford suggest the goal is attainable (though not in its "ideal" expression), and the way forward is through a "community ethic":

> The kinds of refiguring I have been invoking here – focusing on a community
> ethic that would recognize and value difference, on negotiating responsibilities,
> on developing inclusive understandings of authority – cannot easily occur in 10-
> or 14-week parcels of time; nor can they easily develop in cramped and
> inhospitable and highly institutionalized spaces. Least of all can they develop
> where the system of rewards (grades) are linked to traditional models of authority
> and authorship. (76)

In the end, then, Lunsford argues for a recuperated sense of authority as an alternative model that writing teachers might work toward through the development of a "community ethic" in the classroom which displaces authority through acts of responsibility. Lunsford acknowledges the "hard work of creating a community ethic" in the writing classroom, however, and I think Lunsford would agree with Ruszkiewicz here, writing classrooms that do not achieve a sense of community ethic while

foregrounding politics risk becoming "not political at all," but "merely politicized" (Ruszkiewicz 32).

<div align="center">Professional Ethos</div>

Lunsford, then, identifies institutional and disciplinary barriers to productively political writing spaces. Compositionist Carmen Werder, writing for writing program administrators, likewise implicates institutional and administrative practices in terms of power, but in contradistinction, Werder reframes the issue, suggesting the way forward is "by concentrating less on power relations and more on reciprocal relationships," to "accomplish more meaningful and human achievements over time" (21). In other words, Werder seems to advocate for a more benevolent type of authority – one inflected by feminist practices of care and reciprocity. Such a authority, Werder concedes, requires "a professional ethos that pays close attention to moral judgment" based on a rhetorical practice "based on a sound ethical system" (7). Interestingly, Werder suggests that such a position might be written, so to speak, in our DNA through disciplinary professionalization. To be "something beyond efficient managers," Werder suggests, "to convey this emerging sense of professional identity, we need to articulate the traits that we most want others to associate with our collective character" (7). This, Werder makes clear, is an *ethos* of writing program administration. Werder suggests that by highlighting feminist approaches to ethics, such as care and reciprocity, as important to our collective character and habits (*ethos*) to program administration professionalization, writing teachers might see "more meaningful and human achievements over time" rather than by simply forwarding politics in the classroom (21). At one register, Werder appears to address some of Lunsford's "disciplinary barriers" to creating ethical classroom

communities, but such an approach hinges on a shared sense of writing ethics, an ideal complicated by many of the mainstay assumptions of postmodern theory increasingly pressuring research methods and professionalization pedagogies.

Transitioning from Modern to Postmodern Ethics

In 2000, Paul M. Dombrowski publishes a 30-year review (1970-2000) of key literature in composition scholarship working with both ethics and technical communication. His article provides a unique view of the turn from modern to postmodern ethical presumptions underscoring writing pedagogy. For me, Dombrowski's bibliography highlights the destabilizing effects of postmodern theory, and particularly postmodern ethics, on professionalization as basic assumptions of postmodern theory move into the mainstream. One of these assumptions is skepticism toward general rules in recognition of the situated and contextual nature of experience. Dombrowski explains:

> Ethics cannot be reduced to the mechanical conformance to rules, because generalized rules cannot capture the complex contingency of real, particular situations, and because ethical conduct usually involves a heavy measure of personal judgment and decision making (4).

In this sense, the shift from modern to postmodern approaches to ethics represents a shift in emphasis from judgment grounded in metaphysical and transcendental *Truth* and *Law* to one privileging local and contingent *truth* and *laws* in decision making. In other words, the shift from modern to postmodern approaches to ethics in composition scholarship, schematically, represents a turn from Platonic notions of ethics to Aristotelian ones (see also Cooper, "Postmodern"; Porter, *Rhetorical Ethics*; Johannesen).

Interestingly, this turn toward the local and contingent nature of ethical judgment parallels an emerging interest in composition studies literature toward ethics. Whereas, Dombrowski suggests that "until the 1970s, ethics had not appeared as a significant topic in journals of technical writing and communication," his review demonstrates a growing "awareness of the social nature of all discourse and the root interconnectedness of rhetoric and ethics" (4, 3). This growing awareness culminates in the ethical presumption grounded in postmodern theory that "all language use has ethical implications, even when it espouses an ethical neutrality or indifference" (Dombrowski, "Ethics" 4). However, the most significant marker of difference between modern and postmodern approaches to ethics, according to Dombrowski, lies in an emphasis on *action* (as judgment) in modernist ethics, as opposed to the tendency of postmodern ethics to defer judgment in favor of description and analysis from multiple viewpoints (Dombrowski, "Ethics" 15).

<div align="center">Foundational and Nonfoundational Approaches to Ethics</div>

Dombrowski bases the distinction – an important one for writing ethics – on a 1997 essay Mike Markel publishes in the journal *IEEE Transactions on Technical Communication*. Markel's essay affords Dombrowski an opportunity to succinctly present crucial differences between *modernist* (as traditional or foundational ethics) and *postmodern* (as nonfoundational) treatments of ethics. For Markel, "a foundational approach to ethics, such as Kantian ethics or utilitarianism, offers principles or guidelines about appropriate ethical behavior" while a "nonfoundational approach, such as communicative ethics or postmodern ethics, does not" – though, Markel concedes, such approaches might offer "principles or guidelines for analyzing an ethical problem" (Markel 285). Thus, Markel argues that professional writing pedagogy should continue to

teach foundational ethics (that is, not abandon foundational ethics in favor of postmodern ethics) because while "nonfoundational ethical approaches" may provide important insights into epistemological issues, they "do not provide equally powerful insights or useful advice about how to think through ethical dilemmas" (285).

Markel points to several assumptions and strategies of postmodern ethics that make it a poor fit for professional and technical writing pedagogy. First, Markel begins from a single premise: "Technical communicators must act" (285). And many of these actions require ethical judgment, "to transmit technical information that people can use safely, effectively, and efficiently" (Markel 285). Often, Markel suggests technical communicators are confronted with ethical dilemmas and situations that require both that they "must act" with "an active, skeptical attitude toward accepted notions of what constitutes honest information and appropriate professional behavior" (285). For example, technical communicators must regularly "accommodate their different roles as information providers and marketers" (Markel 285). For Markel, postmodern ethics provides little help in situations that require action because it is "descriptive rather than prescriptive," and thus, "can offer no foundational values, no principles, no rules" to support action (290). Markel goes so far to suggest that postmodern ethics "cannot even offer any advice more specific than that we must try to remain open to other people's views and work together constructively" (290). In contrast, foundational approaches to ethics, for Markel, offer "principles of right action," and to some degree, "techniques for discovering the right action when confronted with an ethical dilemma" (287).

Another "major intellectual hurdle" of postmodern ethics, according to Markel, is an apparent "vulnerability to charges of relativism" (Markel 290; see also Dombrowski

17). This charge stems from an assertion that "there is no coherent normative theory against which our ideas and actions can be measured," and that the scope of any given ethical discussion must be narrowed to "only the ideas expressed by those in our community" (Markel 290). For Markel, privileging context results, ultimately, in a devaluing of knowledges claiming to transcend the local event. The displacement of foundational ethics grounded on transcendental claims is, for Markel, the most pernicious effect of postmodern theory and postmodern ethics. Markel suggests postmodern approaches to ethics serve to "forestall the discussion of other approaches," foreclosing upon "a rich body of ethical thought that might be of significant value" (292).

Thus, while Markel points to a "clear consensus among scholars of applied ethics" that foundational ethics "will not provide valid and sure guidelines for resolving all ethical dilemmas in the real world," such approaches are nonetheless important because "technical communicators must act, and scholars and instructors of technical communicators must help them act ethically" (295). This requires students to "learn the skills of critical thinking about ethics and of discussion and consensus building," which means for Markel, that "any instruction in ethics for technical communicators be grounded" in foundational ethical approaches (296). "Our responsibility as educators," Markel writes, is to help students "learn how to live active and honorable public lives" (285). Toward this end, Markel makes a strong case for active decision making grounded in foundational ethics and consensus, rather than inconclusive descriptive exercises and the deferred judgment of postmodern ethical approaches.

Another important chronicler of ethics in technical and professional communication is S. Doheny-Farina who, like Dombrowski, reviews composition studies

scholarship interested in both ethics and professional writing (from 1964 to 1989).

Dombrowski describes Doheny-Farina's organization as divided between "ethics in

practice and ethics in theory" (24). Ethics in practice is then split into "legal, moralistic,

and professional treatments, including codes of ethics," and ethics in theory divided into

"rhetorical and social constructivist treatments" (Dombrowski 24). Overlooking the

commonplace (and contested) binary opposition this organization structures between

practice and theory, Doheny-Farina makes an important distinction for writing ethics by

situating prescriptive ethics in practice, while placing descriptive ethics in theory.

Dombrowski mirrors this division in his own review, and while I see the usefulness of

prescription to practice, I think that the risk of such a view is to reduce ethics in practice

to following rules, which is not what either Doheny-Farina or Dombrowski intend. For

this reason, I prefer to keep both moral prescriptions and ethical description as

possibilities in both practice and theory. That is, writing practice is best considered

having distinct moral and ethical aspects, as with writing theory.

<div align="center">Professional Discourse</div>

One criticism Markel makes toward postmodernism in general is the apparent

inconsistency of an intellectual position which argues against binary thinking by

introducing a binary opposition, that is, the "post" of the postmodern in relation to the

modern. "A hallmark of postmodernist thought is that it rejects binary oppositions,"

Markel writes, "yet, the word *postmodern* exemplifies […] exactly this sort of binary

thinking" (290). This illustrates, for me, the difficulty of breaking from oppositional

strategies and their detrimental effects on research and professionalization scholarship.

Ellen Barton raises just such an issue in a feminist-inflected critique of negative arguments.

Barton arrives at writing ethics questioning the strategy of negative argumentation, which she narrows to "a negative methodological argument" where a "particular research design is placed in opposition to 'traditional' research represented as hegemonic" (401). Barton takes issue with scholarship "arguing negatively against other methodologies" rather than "arguing positively" for the "merits" of one's own methodology (401). As one point of contention and a perennial hotbed of negative argumentation, Barton points to debates around the ethics of empirical and non-empirical methods. "The contact zone between methodologies should no longer remain a war zone, but become a resolution zone," Barton writes, "with empirical and non-empirical researchers making positive arguments for their methodological approaches" (405). Barton appeals to the growing interdisciplinary nature of writing research necessitating hybrid methods and approaches which she hopes might be "united with ethical practices of research" maintained through positive argumentation (409). Unfortunately, Barton writes, "research explicitly declaring its allegiance to the ethical turn far too often makes such negative arguments, presenting a narrow view of the field" and implying "that only certain methodologies incorporate ethical research practices" (401).

The stake is larger than securing the methodological ethical high ground. Barton suggests that "this ethical reification threatens to devalue empirical studies in composition" by throwing into question its very methods (403). And further, "empirical methodologies" are particularly vulnerable to critique, Barton points to feminist critique in particular, since empirical approaches "traditionally background the relationship

between participants and researchers and foreground the presentation of research results within systematic (rather than reflexive) analyses" (403). Finally, Barton warns, negative methodological arguments are detrimental to collective efforts to advance research methodologies, ultimately, limiting the "research designs" available to writing researchers (Barton 403).

As an example of how compositionists might mount positive methodological arguments, Barton raises two feminist-inflected ethical presumptions which she suggests underwrite the ethical turn in research methodology scholarship:

> First, the expectation that research studies return something of value to the community, which, in composition, usually involves literacy services; and second, the assumption that research designs incorporate participatory and collaborative relationships between researchers and participants and self-reflexive relationships with the researcher him/herself. (400)

Barton suggests the shared values of responsibility and reciprocity, values she considers held in common to some degree by all feminist writing researchers, provide a point of methodological overlap across the various approaches to writing research. If writing researchers can agree, Barton continues, to a set of shared values, "ethics could become a common ground between empirical and non-empirical researchers, establishing an area of conflict resolution" in the "unproductive conflict over the value of empirical vs. non-empirical methodologies in composition research" (405).[12]

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[12] Elsewhere, Bruce Horner suggests that the common ground between competing methodological perspectives might be more extensive than responsibility and reciprocity. Horner writes: "Put crudely, given inevitably asymmetrical relations of power between these different parties, and given the partiality of knowledge and experience, researchers are now expected to ask themselves what would constitute ethically responsible ways of defining, initiating, carrying out, and reporting on their research. Those asking

In the following issue, Seth Kahn critiques Barton's proposal that ethics might form a methodological common ground for writing research. Kahn begins by questioning the structural homology organizing Barton's essay, particularly her binary opposition of "empirical" and "non-empirical" methods – a divide he finds all too common in the discourse of writing research. In contrast, Kahn suggests writing research needs to move "beyond the binary logic that has bounded our debates over research/knowledge-making ethics" ("Rethinking" 288). Kahn suggests that Barton's notion of ethics as a site of methodological convergence is too idealistic. He proposes instead that the source of methodological divergence is "a product of different, but not mutually exclusive, historical narratives of research in and around composition" (Kahn, "Rethinking" 288). In other words, Kahn attributes methodological disagreements to competing modernist and postmodernist historical narratives – a position illuminated by the surveys of ethics in professional and technical communication contributed separately by Markel, Dombrowski, and Doheny-Farina. Thus, Kahn reads Barton's essay, and particularly her privileging of feminist ethics of reciprocity and care, as arising "from a very different historical narrative," a "narrative of postmodernization" ("Rethinking" 289). Kahn continues:

> This narrative says that traditional modes of inquiry are grounded in rationalist ways of knowing, which taken together produce hegemonic discourses. In the last few decades, researchers have begun question this grounding. Particularly in anthropology, Levi-Strauss and others began long ago to move toward

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themselves such questions have produced myriad recommendations, but I'll focus on the three that have garnered the most attention and that are most germane to questions of materiality: an emphasis on collaboration, on multivocality, and on self-reflexivity" (562–3).

structuralism(s), focusing attention on language practices and the social

construction of knowledge. ("Rethinking" 289)

Kahn suggests that by adopting a dialectical view of knowledge construction, it

becomes possible "to read the opposing sides of the debate as not really opposing each

other" ("Rethinking" 288). In other words, methodological knowledge advances through

a (sometimes agonistic) dialectical historical process energized by ongoing debate. In the

end, then, Kahn takes issue with Barton's criticism of negative methodological arguments

as succumbing to the same impulse she contests. Kahn explains, "by telling the

representatives of the ethical turn that they are wrong for being so negative, she is, in

effect, negating their negativity" ("Rethinking" 287). Kahn concedes that his own

criticism of Barton's method also fails to move beyond a negative methodological

argument – a conundrum finally put to rest the following year by disciplinary guidelines

for ethical research.

<div align="center">Guidelines for Ethical Writing Research</div>

In 2001, the CCC Ad Hoc Committee on the Ethical Use of Students and Student

Writing in Composition Studies published the "Guidelines for the Ethical Treatment of

Students and Student Writing in Composition Studies." In 2003, the committee succeeds

in elevating the guidelines to an official "CCCC Position Statement" approved by the

CCCC Executive Committee. The ad hoc committee of six, chaired by Paul Anderson,

and consisting of research scholars, Davida Charney, Marilyn Cooper, and Peter

Mortensen, among others, sought to provide not simply a set of guidelines for ethical

research, but also, in recognition of the need to "negotiate with committees about IRB

requirements or restrictions that hamper research unnecessarily and without benefit to

participants," a document that composition scholars might provide "members of the review committee may need to be educated about the particular methods and methodologies of writing research" (CCCC). At stake for the ad hoc committee was increasing institutional oversight by reviewers growing insensitive to the specific requirements of writing research. The official guidelines are a preemptive move to "engage in ongoing conversations with regulatory agents to advise them in developing policies, regulations, and laws that take into account the methods and methodologies of writing research" (CCCC). The authors explain:

> These guidelines apply to all efforts by scholars, teachers, administrators, students, and others that are directed toward publication of a book or journal article, presentation at a conference, preparation of a thesis or dissertation, display on a website, or other general dissemination of the results of research and scholarship. The guidelines apply to formally planned investigations and to studies that discuss students and student writing that the composition specialists encountered in other ways, such as when teaching classes, conducting student conferences, directing academic programs, or working at campus and community writing or literacy centers. (CCCC)

One might argue the expanded scope of the guidelines overlap with recommendations voiced by both Barton and Lunsford in creating an ethical methodological common ground and by intervening in national, institutional, and disciplinary research methodology policy (cf. Barton, "More Methodological"; Lunsford "Forward").

A second concern for the authors of the guidelines is ethical representation of the research subject and to treat their human subjects in ways that are "fair and serious, cause no harm" (CCCC). For example, the authors of the guidelines write:

Composition specialists describe individual students and groups of students fairly and accurately, in ways that are accountable to the data, observation, or other evidence on which the descriptions are based. They describe students in ways that are fair and serious, cause no harm, and protect the students' privacy. (CCCC)

The two paramount ethical concerns grounding the writing research guidelines, then, are *relationships* and *representation*. Mortensen suggests in a later interview that a central question for him as a research scholar and contributor to the guidelines is how to "show respect to those about whom we write" (qtd. in Brooke et al. 19). This "respect" for "those about whom we write" requires researchers both attend to the researcher-research subject relationship, but also to do no harm in the representation. Catherine Hobbs, writing a few years later (2005), explains the notion of "harm" in respect to her own practice of life narrative: "Perhaps I have harmed my relations, setting back their interests, if not actually violating their rights, by various errors or implications in my published writing" (408). Thus, the ethical turn in English studies, which culminates in an official CCCC Position Statement on ethical research practices, presents two ethical values to paramount importance: relationships and representation.

In a 2003 interview with leading writing research scholars, Ellen Cushman and Peter Mortensen, Robert Brooke and Amy Goodburn provide further insight into the writing research climate at the time. Brooke and Goodburn describe the guidelines as picking up "ongoing conversations about ethics in composition studies" and seeking a

"wider audience for them" (Brooke et al. 7). The concerns underwriting much of the

ongoing conversations were "changes in institutional oversight," which "broadened the

definition of research, thereby increasing the number of composition scholars for whom

questions about ethics are relevant" (Brooke et al. 8). In this sense, Brooke suggests the

Guidelines serve as "a regulatory structure that defends against other regulatory

structures (9). For Brooke, the guidelines "anticipate a future in which academic

disciplines that don't take an affirmative stance on good research practices won't find

themselves with much footing should it be necessary" (9). At root, then, the guidelines

represent an effort "to push back against regulation" perceived as "intrusive" or

"insensitive to the particulars" of writing research "and ultimately counter to the interests

of those 'human subjects' such regulations ostensibly protect" (Brooke et al. 9). Thus,

"we see the reasons behind the decisions that generated a regulatory structure that

defends against other regulatory structures," Cushman explains, and why "the Guidelines

have the potential to be permissive and constraining even as they offer those who need it

leverage for their positions, justification for their practices, and guidance in those

practices" (qtd. in Brooke et al. 9).

<div align="center">Relational Ethics</div>

Since adopting the ethical writing research guidelines, researcher-research subject

relations have become a central ethical concern in writing research. As Barton suggests

above, the key areas of ethical interest in researcher-subject relations are influenced by

feminist ethics of care and reciprocity. Katrina M. Powell and Pamela Takayoshi, writing

in 2003, illustrate how care and reciprocity inform writing research, precluding any

thought of "research relationships as just another variable" to "manipulate" in a "research context" (417).

Powell and Takayoshi suggest that centering ethics in their own research helped to highlight the importance of "the *quality* of the relationships we build with research participants – not just in terms of our research questions or the study but in terms of people forming relationships with others" (398). They suggest that building "authentically reciprocal relationships" requires consideration of "relationship-building process, which involves multiple parties, all of whom need to contribute to the construction of the relationship for it to be reciprocal" (417). As a result, they suggest "expanding the current conversations surrounding ethics of reciprocity," to consider "on-the-spot decision making" (417).

Powell and Takayoshi draw upon Kirsch to describe a gap in research guidelines in supporting better "on-the-spot" decisions. Kirsch writes: "Researchers still make important ethical decisions by the 'seat-of-their-pants' often with little time for reflection and few, if any, prior experiences to guide them" (Kirsch qtd. in Powell and Takayoshi 414). For Powell and Takayoshi, "Kirsch's description of 'seat-of-their-pants' ethical decisions makes concrete the abstract concept of *kairos"* (414). Powell and Takayoshi turn to *kairos* "to further theorize" their "ethics of reciprocity," recognizing the inevitability of variables "not under a researcher's predetermined control" (414). The authors explain, "*kairos* is a contextually bound principle" that "underscores the fact that appropriateness can be determined only within the moment" (Powell and Takayosh 415).

For Powell and Takayoshi, *kairos* supports "reciprocal research relationships" by suggesting "the appropriate form of reciprocity could be different in different situations,"

and that "moments of dissensus" indicate "a need to pay attention to the purposes and needs of subjects that may not involve research" (415). Thus, Powell and Takayoshi's thickening of the concept of *kairos* asks writing researchers "to recognize that there are no universally right or appropriate ways of working with participants – there are only contingent truths determined by the community of people" (416). This view represents, in Markel's terms, "an abandonment of foundational ethics, which imply there are, in fact, appropriate and universal ways of working with participants" to a nonfoundational approach, privileging the available means of the situated event. However, Powell and Takayoshi seek, through their development of research *kairos*, to supplement universal guidelines with a counterbalance of the situated moment.

In an article published in *Pedagogy* (2001), Marshall Gregory suggests how teacher-researchers might center ethical reciprocity in their classrooms. Gregory writes:

> If students need teachers, and they do, to become the best versions of themselves, teachers need students to become the best versions of themselves as well, and in this reciprocity of mutual assistance all of us, students and teachers alike, may learn, if we are careful, how to tend better through education the fragile relations of personal development, human community, and civilized conduct. (87)

Gregory suggests "the most important variable in the chemical mix" contributing to student success is "the students' sense of who their teachers are as persons," which he terms "teacher ethos" (77). An appropriate teacher ethos, for Gregory, is one that "exhibits an ethos of passion, commitment, deep interest, involvement, honesty, curiosity, excitement" (77). "Such enthusiasm justifies our efforts as learners" Gregory writes, "because *we, too*, want to know things that will make us love our lives more" (77).

Indeed, such a concept of teacher ethos seems at odds with what might be called a cool and detached "researcher ethos." And further, Gregory's sense of an appropriate teacher ethos backgrounds "those features of teacherly life that usually get foregrounded: professional standing, disciplinary expertise, intellectual ability, and so on" (86). By forwarding his sense of teacher ethos, Gregory suggests writing teachers consider "who we are" at least as carefully "as we think about what we know and do" (86).

Gregory develops his version of teacher ethos specifically to address risk in the writing classroom. Gregory explains: "Real learning is always risky because the possibility of failure is always real. There is always the possibility for the student of being inadequate or simply getting something wrong" (87). Gregory suggests that while many students might prefer teachers "address risk simply by minimizing it," this is "unproductive and self defeating" because, Gregory claims, "progress requires risk," and therefore, writing pedagogy should support risk taking (87). "Students' sense of being supported sufficiently to take risks," Gregory suggests, "depends more on teacher ethos than on any other single variable" (87). Gregory, then, arrives at writing ethics through the recognition that positive, risk-taking behavior in students depends upon a reciprocal relationship with their teachers, as much as who students perceive their teachers to be.

<div style="text-align:center">Representational Ethics</div>

In contrast to Gregory, who privileges teacher identity in the ethical writing classroom, compositionist, Barbara Schneider, points to potentially more vulnerable student identities and those they write about. For Schneider, ethical representation is the most critical aspect in writing classrooms that join "traditional humanist modes of inquiry to more recent incursions into the methods of social science" (81). Schneider points to

one of the basic assumptions of writing pedagogy, that "language is both communicative"
and "representational" (81). While the communicative function of language is apparent,
many students need help recognizing the ways in which language practices are
"constructive of identities and values in ways that can be repressive, progressive,
conservative, or liberatory" (Schneider 81). As a result, Schneider suggests that "the
consequences of representation" should be included in first-year writing courses along
with the "basic ethics of research" such as "academic honesty" and "standards of fairness
in communication" (81). Schneider explains:

> Researchers who conduct qualitative studies on human subjects and communities
> have struggled productively with questions of how we speak for and about others
> through our representations of them. […] If we are teachers acting as researchers,
> is observation enough or is active intervention that arises from our expertise as
> teachers and literacy workers ethically required? How do we represent the voices
> of others in texts that we produce and claim as our own without appropriating
> them? […] What obligations as researchers do we owe study participants? (84)

Ethics and questions of representation, then, are central to writing pedagogy.
When "we assign our students to perform" research but "do not teach them the research
ethics and principles that guide" such research, Schneider writes, "we may hold to our
obligations as researchers, but we neglect our obligations as teachers" (81).

Nancy Mack is another teacher-researcher interested in identity formation and
writing pedagogy who, like Schneider, incorporates qualitative research methodologies
into many of her college writing courses. Mack observes that in general "ethics is not
usually an issue in writing courses unless we are talking about inappropriate student

behavior like plagiarism" (69). However, Mack describes in an article appearing in *Pedagogy* how questions of ethical representation arise naturally in her classes "as students […] make decisions about how they will use language to represent others" (70). Mack elaborates:

> Students may wonder about changing names, creating a composite incident, adding characters, depicting negative points of view, including oneself, and using dialect, slang, or profanity. I want students to compose a text with ethical social relations among multiple identities – those of others as well as those that they claim for themselves. (70)

Mack draws on linguistic philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin to develop her sense of ethical responsibility in representing self and others. Reading through Bakhtin, Mack suggests "writers must determine how they will represent themselves in relation to the implied other" and in so doing discover that "society may have authored an identity for students that they might wish to revise" (69). For Mack, "self-identity is a semiotic social formation," and it is the discursive nature of representations that makes "identity both fatally predictable and hopefully imaginative" (70). At stake, then, for Mack is the realization that "writing presents the unique possibility of actively creating a revision of self-identity" (69). However, Mack's reading of Bakhtin suggests for her that "language resists efforts 'to appropriate the alien word that is saturated with the intentions of others'" (Bakhtin qtd. in Mack 69). Thus, a central pedagogical insight for Mack is that "constructing a scholarly identity requires great linguistic self-control" requiring authors to create and control "multiple selves portrayed within the text" (Mack 70).

Of particular interest to Mack are the ways working-class students negotiate and represent academic identities. Mack suggests that "working-class students" are placed at a disadvantage when asked to "author writing that creates a dialogue among the competing voices from their multiple lives both inside and outside the academy" because of the distance between academic and their home discourse (70). However, Mack suggests that centering ethics and representation in the writing classroom affords students opportunities to question discursive identities in ways that are helpful for marginal and underrepresented identities. On the other hand, Mack continues, "writing assignments that do not allow working-class students the agency to make ethical decisions about their texts deny them an important opportunity to develop academic integrity and to gain agency to construct their chosen multiple identities" (70). Thus, for Mack, writing ethics provides a valuable framework for authoring "ethical social relations among multiple identities – those of others as well as those that they claim for themselves," supporting the forging of new academic identities (70).

<div align="center">Other-Oriented Ethics</div>

What I find interesting about Mack's arrival at ethics through Bakhtin is the counterpoint that she provides to the ethics of philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, whose Other-oriented ethics usually dominate discussions of ethical responsibility in writing scholarship (see also Cooper, "Postmodern Ethics"; Bernard-Donals, "Guest"; Davis *Inessential Solidarity*). Where Mack emphasizes Bakhtin's concepts of dialogic and heteroglossia, Levinas' ethics are rooted in an ontological critique of Western metaphysics, which hierarchize self above other. Grant Matthew Jenkins suggests Western epistemological and ethical traditions before Levinas "manifested an ontological

imperialism" (564). That is, before Levinas "the Western 'ontological' tradition" was "concerned primarily with the self and with questions of being," whereas Levinas offers an ethics, according to Jenkins, "properly concerned with questions of the Other" (Jenkins 564). Thus, where Mack's reading of Bahktin remains dialogic, and even agonistic, Jenkins reads Levinas' notion of Other as "neither oppositional nor dialectical," but rather a new metaphysics in which the Other simply takes "precedence over the subject in every context," without "turning the Other into the same" (563). For Jenkins, "Levinas' theory allows us to do is both describe and promote that responsibility within the art and practice of teaching" – an ethical, other-oriented practice that "ask us to rethink how our teaching might differ if we put the Other first before reason" (562–3).

While Jenkins theorizes writing ethics based on Levinas' ontological priority of an Other, a more common way in composition scholarship looks to the ethical relation between self and Other rhetorically (cf. Porter, "Developing"; Kinneavy "Ethics and Rhetoric"; Bizzell, "The Politics"). Ellen Barton, writing in 2008, provides a representational example of the later. Barton develops her "perspective on ethics as interactional and rhetorical," highlighting the central role of ethics in "decision making" in writing research; subsequently, she makes the claim that writing research "can make important contributions to the understanding of ethics" to disciplines outside composition studies ("Further" 599). Barton suggests that writing scholars are uniquely positioned as scholars of discourse and the rhetorical tradition to make important insights into ethics "based on our critical perspective on language as rhetorical and our multiple methods of analyzing the language of ethics as it actually takes place in particular contexts and decision-making interactions" ("Further" 599). Barton continues:

The fundamental insight that composition/rhetoric offers to the literature on ethics and bioethics is that decision-making with ethical dimensions is most often interactional and therefore rhetorical. In other words, such decision making takes place between real people, in real time, in (semi-)ordinary language that is typically more indirect than direct, within complex situations that are institutional and asymmetrical, and thus within a rhetorical context that always involves persuasion and, sometimes, resistance. ("Further" 599)

Interestingly, Barton suggests her approach to ethics might serve to mediate between what Markel terms foundational and non-foundational ethics. Barton terms these opposing notions of ethics as "a principle-based ethics of rights and a context-based ethic of care" ("Further" 623).[13] A principle-based ethics, for Barton, "seeks guidelines that can be applied across the board" in research settings, such as "voluntary participation" and "informed consent" (Barton, "Further" 623). In contrast, a context-based ethics assumes that "guidelines can oversimplify and that decision making is ultimately the act of an individual in his or her personal and social context ("Further" 623). Barton suggests rhetorical scholars might defuse the tension between principle- and context-based approaches to research ethics by "generate complex mutualities rather than binary differences" ("Further" 623). Barton writes: "The methodological approach I lay out here claims that analyzing the language of decision making interactionally and rhetorically

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[13] Care ethics in composition scholarship point backward to Nell Nodding's influential 1984 monograph, *Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics*, in which Noddings develops her pedagogical embrace of (traditionally assigned) notions of feminine care and rejection of received, rule-based ethics. Scholars in writing and literacy research quickly adopted care ethics. For example, Kelly A. Concannon Mannise, writing in 2011, suggests her "work poses new directions for complicating relationships between care ethics and service-learning and reveals a strong commitment to pedagogical scholars' call for critical reflection" (27).

identifies and complicates certain concepts and assumptions within ethical frameworks, whether that framework is a traditional ethics of rights or a feminist ethic of care" ("Further" 599).

It is important to note, however, that Barton acknowledges that her "experience suggests" that principle-based ethics will probably win the day in research practice regulation because context-based practices remain "too unwieldy to be applied in this context of ethics in volume" ("Further" 623-4). Thus, in the field of writing research scholarship, principle-based ethics have come to dominate in institutional and regulatory policies, while context-based approaches are typically reserved for making judgments, as Kirsch describes, in the local context by the "seat-of-their-pants" (qtd. in Powell and Takayoshi 414).

<center>Ethical Judgment</center>

Ethical judgment is a perennial theme for scholars in writing research scholarship, particularly prevalent as writing researchers begin to appropriate methods from the social sciences and anthropology in the early 1980s. It is in search of methods and guidelines to facilitate judgment that many writing researchers and professional communicators arrive at ethics. Whether that judgment is rendered at the design stage or by the seat-of-the-pants in the research context, the question most often put to ethics is how might it help writers make decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. In this sense, ethics as it has developed in research methodology and professionalization writing pedagogies has tended to embrace prescriptive, foundational approaches (see Barton, "Further"). At points where an ethical approach is perceived to defer judgment, or to operate purely descriptively, such as with some non-foundational ethical approaches grounded in

postmodern theory, ethics falls under sharp criticism (see Markel; Dombrowski; Faigley).

Two writing researchers who unapologetically view ethics concerned with judgment,

Heidi A. McKee and James E. Porter, publish in 2009 an expanded image of writing

ethics intended to support not only research related decision-making processes but also to

address many of the ethical dilemmas raised in researching writing in electronic media

and in internetworked environments.

McKee and Porter declare their book primarily interested in "questions involving

'research ethics'" as a "type of applied ethics that seeks to develop appropriate, fair, and

just behavior for researchers," but they also envision ethics as "a field of inquiry that

explores problematic issues, examines borderline cases, and, even, conducts its own

empirical research on ethical matters" (xvii). This perspective is very much aligned with

the positions Porter develops in his 1996 monograph (*Rhetorical Ethics*). However,

bringing new writing technology into focus with the ethical requirements of writing

research affords McKee and Porter an opportunity to expand the case-based approach that

Porter developed earlier and apply his heuristic method to more contemporaneous ethical

dilemmas. While the authors appear to position their work between principled and

context approaches, they clearly privilege the rhetorical context and local decision-

making. McKee and Porter describe their book as offering "a rhetorical, case-based

approach for considering ethical issues, an approach that is flexible and adaptable to

specific circumstances but that also provides decision-making heuristics that are more

broadly applicable across various research projects, especially qualitative research

projects" (xviii).

McKee and Porter's project, then, consists of two main efforts. The first is to "collect cases in Internet research" which highlight representative "ethical questions" and build case-studies from these issues by describing what the "Internet researchers" did about the ethical issues they encountered. The second part of their approach provides "case-based heuristic tools to aid researchers in the process of analyzing and responding to the various ethical dilemmas they may encounter" (xviii). Thus, in many ways, the collection of examples and development of heuristics allow McKee and Porter to present practical tools for ethical judgment while evading strictly foundational or non-foundational approaches. In this sense, McKee and Porter represent the culmination of engagement in ethics by scholars arriving from the direction of research methodology and professionalization pedagogies. Support for this claim is indicated by the degree to which writing research scholarship has assimilated to the approach first developed by Porter and fully operationalized by McKee and Porter. An example of this influence is found in Toby F. Coley's monograph, *Teaching with Digital Media in Writing Studies: An Exploration of Ethical Responsibilities* (2012) in which Coley works the fertile writing research ground of literacy and technology.

In some ways, Coley's book represents a step backward in research ethics in so far as he blurs the boundaries between ethics and morality. Coley writes: "Ethics is defined here as a theory of moral conduct, related to proper action, attitudes, right and wrong, and notions of virtue and morality" (6). This is, of course, to define ethics in terms of morality, which confuses an important distinction made throughout my review. Thus, when Coley describes ethics as "the theory through which we make decisions based on our individual circumstances, the theory that guides our understanding of

whether a particular action or attitude is moral or virtuous (right) or whether it is immoral or vicious (wrong)," he reduces morality to decision making (6). This is to confuse the prescriptive functions of moral Laws and the descriptive/analytical function of ethics; however, Coley does contribute a useful "framework for the exigency of exploring ethical digital media use in the first-year writing class room" as ethical literacy (7).

Coley's focus on writing technologies affords him the opportunity to describe what he terms ethical literacy. He points to Michael Pemberton's collection of essays in which he compares ethics in the classroom to "multiple literacies, special purpose literacies, and literacy in particular contexts" (qtd. in Coley 7). This, for Coley, points to the need to articulate an ethics of writing instruction that is informed by composition scholarship working in literacy. Coley, drawing upon Stuart Selber's 2004 monograph, *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*, writes:

> First and foremost, I believe this book contributes to our understanding of multiliteracies by adding to Selber's three literacies – functional, critical, and rhetorical literacy – a fourth literacy: ethical literacy. The need for ethical literacy is evident in our society's changing understanding of print media and ethics. (2)

Coley's monograph contributes a few case-studies where writing researchers must confront ethical dilemmas, an approach Porter and McKee establish as provisional guides to support difficult decision making. However, Coley's book, ultimately, serves to blur a line between ethics and morality, and his emphasis on decision making elides the important contributions of feminist composition scholars who have contributed a rich and expanded sense of ethics in research methodology, which tends to cluster around issues of representation and responsibility, reciprocity and care.

Ethics and Inquiry

Writing in 2011, Teresa Henning explains that she has "come to closely align critical thinking with ethics," in that "ethics is an important form of critical and rhetorical inquiry that can and should have a prominent place in the writing classroom" (34). To this end, Henning asks her students to analyze values. For Henning, when students participate "in the process of identifying values and relating them to a specific situation, such as a rhetorical situation," they engage "in both critical thinking and ethical inquiry" (34). Thus, ethics operates as a "mode of inquiry" which invites "teachers, students, and scholars to consider: Who is responsible? For what is one responsible and to whom?" (Henning 34). For Henning, practicing "ethics as mode of inquiry focuses our attention not only on rules but also on contexts and relationships" (35). Henning suggests by considering the various relationships represented in the "rhetorical situation, we open up the act of communication to ethical inquiry because relationships entail responsibility" (35). For Henning, then, "ethical inquiry helps students understand that writing is a form of action with 'real power'" and "consequences for others," and "incorporating ethics as critical, rhetorical inquiry" helps "writers better understand how to use communication to create responsible and caring relationships with others" (40).

Curator Comments: An Ethics of Method

Mortensen and Kirsch highlight a tension in research methodology that I find illuminating. On the one hand, Mortensen and Kirsch support "the urgency to fix hard standards of reliability, validity, and generalizability," while on the other hand, they champion the assertion that "interpretation is central to all research" (xxi). This tension becomes visible, for example, when Bishop realizes midway through her dissertation that

"all research relies on persuasion, including ethnography" – an alarming realization for a self-described positivist (Bishop 149, 148). Bishop explains: "How could research that seemed more and more to rely on my subjectivity, interpretations, and, finally, storytelling skills be a vehicle for reliable and valid results?" (148).

I see the question of ethical representation raised as an assertion in Mortensen and Kirsch, who write that "there can be no value-neutral research methodology" (xxi). I find this claim provocative because it raises pedagogical and methodological questions that appear, for me, unanswerable without ethics. That is, once we assume "all research is persuasion," and assumptions of scientific objectivity are set aside, then a central concern of writing, teaching writing, and writing research becomes ethical representation (Bishop 149). It is out of a concern for ethical representation that Schneider asks, "what obligations as researchers do we owe study participants?" (84).

Thus, a central tension between representation and interpretation in research methodology is foregrounded through the application of ethics. This tension is important because ethical representation of research subjects is a generally shared concern of researchers and institutional oversight administrators, and as a result, ethical representation is explicitly linked to writing research ethics, whereas, ethical interpretation is comparatively far less developed. For example, the term *interpretation* appears three times in the "CCCC Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies" – each time in direct reference to *representation* (CCCC). In other words, interpretation represents a risk to the accuracy and repeatability of research findings. This suggests interpretation threatens most explicitly the ends of writing research; however, interpretation is active at all points of the research process and not just

the end result. To narrow interpretation to accurately presenting one's conclusions, and the data supporting those conclusions, is to risk overlooking the importance of writing ethics to interpretation – that is, the fairness of one's representations – to writing research. So, while it is clear that the writing research community has made great progress in the institutionalization of writing research as an ethical practice, there is still important work to be done.

Returning to my efforts to consider writing as the practice of freedom, I ask how the tension between representation and interpretation might inform my writing practice and pedagogy. Certainly, as Mack suggests, students "must make decisions about how they will use language to represent others" (70). And like Mack, I encourage students to approach writing ethically by attending to the "ethical social relations" imbricated in composing representations "of others as well as those that they claim for themselves" (70). Accuracy is, of course, a priority, but I think this places too much emphasis on the ends or results of research. Rather, I suggest interpretation is an equally important point – a point well-developed by several of the scholars of research methodology who have drawn upon ethics to develop their ideas on reciprocity and mutual benefit, staging ethical interventions into all aspects of writing research (cf. Gregory; Kahn, "Putting"; Powell and Takayoshi). By constructing reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships with the subjects of writing, teaching, and research, we might become more accountable to those we write about, teach, and study, and therefore, I hope, more responsible in our representations.

CHAPTER 5: WRITING ETHICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

> What a body can do is determined, at least in part, by its relations with other
> bodies. The degree of power possessed by any given body is dictated by its
> relations with those which surround it.
>
> Moria Gatens, *Through a Spinozist Lens*

In Chapter 5, I describe composition scholarship arriving at ethics concerned with social justice and identity politics through the lens of classroom advocacy. Here writing is both an instrument of oppression and liberation. Critical pedagogues and feminist scholars such as Elizabeth Ellsworth, Christy Friend, and Donna LeCourt, among others, arrive at the field of ethics addressing social inequities, which they see reflected in writing classrooms. Ethics in this line of thinking often presents an opportunity to re-think or challenge existing biases (for example, heteronormativity) by affording some degree of play in established codes and norms. For example, researchers invested in social justice sometimes cast new technology in an optimistic light because they perceive its potential to disrupt reified social structures. Online writing, and specifically, avatars, for example, afford some "play" in what gender, race, or cultural background one might assume online.

Ethics and Self-Fashioning

Judith Butler suggests "the ethical does not primarily describe conduct or disposition, but characterizes a way of understanding the relational framework within which sense, action and speech become possible" (*Senses* 12). In other words, ethics provides a framework with which I might begin to describe the ways in which I am compelled to behave, or to participate and be recognized as a subject of a given discourse. Ethics describes the forces that shape and render visible the subject, and thus,

as Butler suggests, "the contours of an ethical relationship emerge from this ongoing paradox of subject formation" (*Senses* 6). The paradox lies in the assumption that I am formed at the same time I form myself through an ongoing process which Butler describes as "my own self-formative activity" (*Senses* 6). Thus, for many of the compositionists that arrive at ethics with a primary concern for forwarding advocacy and social justice in the classroom and beyond, ethics provides a framework with which to interrogate identity and constructionist assumptions about reality. Ethics following a Butlerian and general Foucauldian line of thinking are quickly adaptable to classrooms and provide a vocabulary, concepts, and descriptive methods for critical thinking, specifically, for me, in describing, as Butler describes ethics, "the relational framework within which sense, action and speech become possible" (*Senses* 12). Writing ethics is a set of practices and thoughts about what it means to write to create oneself, to fashion oneself with words, albeit, with the words of Others. The scholarship and research that follows participates in this effort to understand the role of ethics in the formation and politicization of discursive identities in the composition classroom.

<div align="center">Rationalism and Ethics</div>

Elizabeth Ellsworth, writing in the *Harvard Review* in 1989, signals, for me, a rising tide of theoretical critique which will increasingly push critical and progressive pedagogues toward ethics. Ellsworth challenges "liberatory" assumptions of critical pedagogy, arguing critical pedagogy remains veiled in the mantle of patriarchal culture and repressive language practices. This last point is particularly painful for Ellsworth, reminding her readers of Audre Lorde's famous claim that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (qtd. in Ellsworth 9). For Ellsworth, as for Lorde, calling

upon marginalized identities "to justify and explicate their claims in terms of the master's tools – tools such as rationalism, fashioned precisely to perpetuate their exclusion" is an oppressive tactic aimed, in Lorde's terms, "keeping 'the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns'" (qtd. in Ellsworth 9).

Ellsworth criticizes critical pedagogy – by which her literature review implies she is speaking most directly to Henry A. Giroux, Peter McLaren, Ira Shor, and to some extent Paulo Freire – for the assumption "that students and teachers can and should engage each other in the classroom as fully rational subjects" (93). In contrast, Ellsworth reports that her experiences with critical pedagogy in the classroom have often (and quickly) thrown the "rationalists assumptions" of critical pedagogy into question (96). This assumption of rationality, Ellsworth explains, seeks to transform conflict into a rational debate by setting up "as its opposite an irrational Other, which has been understood historically as the providence of women and other exotic Others" (94). Ellsworth suggests that, "in a racist society and its institutions," such a debate will not include "the voices of all the affected parties" nor afford "them equal weight and legitimacy" (94). Ellsworth notes that the "enforcement of rationalism as a self-evident political act against relations of domination" is thoroughly discredited by poststructuralism, which has "facilitated a devastating critique of the violence of rationalism against its Others" through systems of exclusions of marginal identities (96). Ellsworth suggests that rationalist approaches normalize the "exclusion of socially constructed irrational Others – women, people of color, nature," precluding marginalized identities from participating in a debate predicated on the "the logics of rationalism and scientism," which serve to "perpetuate their exclusion" (97).

Though she does not take up ethics explicitly in her article, Ellsworth's central criticism is, indeed, pointed at what I call here writing ethic*s*. For example, Ellsworth suggests one priority that follows from the "rationalist assumptions" of critical pedagogy is to teach "analytic and critical skills for judging the truth and the merit of propositions," to help students "arrive logically at the 'universally valid proposition' underlying the discourse of critical pedagogy," which Ellsworth describes as the "right to the freedom from oppression guaranteed by the democratic social contract" (96). Thus, critical pedagogy "assumes a commitment on the part of the professor/teacher toward ending the student's oppression," but the "literature offers no sustained attempt to problematize this stance and confront the likelihood that the professor brings" to the classroom "her or his own race, class, ethnicity, gender and other positions," and as such, cannot "play the role of a disinterested mediator on the side of the oppressed group" (101). In other words, "critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change" (Ellsworth 101). In this sense, critical pedagogy, as Ellsworth presents it, ignores the ethical questions underlying the asymmetrical balance of power between teachers and students and the degree to which this imbalance limits student expression (101).

A second point to Ellsworth's critique is the assertion that all knowledge is partial, and as such, no one perspective may claim privileged access to the truth. "All knowings are partial," Ellsworth explains, "there are fundamental things each of us cannot know," the classroom is composed of "partial socially constructed knowledges," and when critical pedagogy theories fail to consider the specificity of those they teach, "they reproduce, by default, the category of generic 'critical teacher' – a specific form of the generic human that underlies classical liberal thought" (102). Ellsworth argues, then,

for a sustained engagement with the ultimate unknowability of nature, objects and the Other – "to recognize not only the multiplicity of knowledges" present in the classroom, but that "these knowledges are contradictory, partial, and irreducible" (112).

Ellsworth forwards a "pedagogy of the unknowable," and asks what kind of "educational project could redefine 'knowing' so that it no longer describes the activities of those in power," of those privileged identities that speak on behalf of silent others (113). To this end, Ellsworth advocates for a teaching practice "grounded in the unknowable" which is "profoundly contextual (historical) and interdependent (social)" and "cannot be predicted, prescribed, or understood beforehand by any theoretical framework or methodological practice" (115). Ellsworth suggests, "right now, the classroom practice that seems most capable of accomplishing this is one that facilitates a kind of communication across differences" (115). Ellsworth suggests such communication across difference is represented in the following statement:

> If you can talk to me in ways that show you understand that your knowledge of me, the world, and the 'Right thing to do' will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to others, and if I can do the same, then we can work together on shaping and reshaping alliances for constructing circumstances in which students of difference can thrive. (115)

Youngian Ethics and the Politics of Difference

While Ellsworth walks the line between political and ethical notions of difference without addressing writing ethics directly, Christy Friend explicitly takes up ethics and the politics of difference as a means to a more socially just writing classroom community. In a 1994 article, Friend describes her pedagogical project as creating "classrooms

centered on diversity, productive conflict, ongoing dialogue about ethical issues"

("Ethics" 549). Like Ellsworth, Friend takes issue with residual humanist and idealist

notions underscoring critical pedagogy, which she confronts in her feminist re-reading of

constructivist notions of community. Friend turns to feminist political theorist Iris Marion

Young whose notion of ethics provide Friend a platform from which to criticize

contemporaneous approaches to critical pedagogy that fail "to account fully for

institutional structures of oppression and domination" (549).

Following Young, Friend points to the failure of critical pedagogy to connect its

political agenda sufficiently to postmodern ethics, and as a result critical approaches have

tended to "all fall into what" Young "calls a 'distributive logic' ethics – a consumption-

based paradigm which fails to account fully for institutional structures of oppression and

domination" ("Ethics" 549). In other words, without the critical perspective of

postmodern approaches to ethics, and in particular community, political writing

pedagogies cannot sufficiently account for institutional and cultural effects of

"domination and oppression" ("Ethics" 551). Friend suggests foregrounding oppressive

structures by centering ethics in the composition classroom, and in particular

"nondistributive phenomena," such as "language and culture" – as the "images,

meanings, and symbols human beings use to define themselves in relation to others"

(551). For this reason, composition classrooms are important sites for interrogating

nondistributive phenomena contributing to discursive oppression. For example, "culture"

in particular for Friend and Young, "plays an important role in (re)producing oppression"

(551). Friend quoting Young suggests "ethics must, politicize culture" by "bringing

language, gestures, . . . images, interactive conventions, and so on, into explicit

reflection," by "'making them the subject of public discussion, and explicitly matters of choice and decision'" (Young qtd. in Friend 551). Friend describes the "the composition classroom," – "a space already dedicated to these kinds of analysis" – constitutes an ideal forum for developing and employing a Youngian ethics" for critical writing pedagogies interested in politics (552).

Ellsworth, then, confronts critical pedagogy for its dialectical Cartesianism, which poses questions in terms of opposites, while Friend and Young, separately advocate for pluralist models of community based on difference. Their projects are prompted partly by the challenge postmodern theory poses received notions of subjectivity.[14] These scholars suggest a classroom might pose as a microcosm of political and social discourse outside the class, and as such, act in Mary Louise Pratt's terms, as a "contact zone" where students encounter the different social and political assumptions and their effects. Virginia Anderson questions the value, and the ethics, of asking students to "join in rethinking discredited guarantees of social justice" (262). In fact, Anderson suggests this method increases student apathy to the methods of critique (262). Anderson reports in her own classes, students, rather than participate in the re-imagining of the social contracts, "cling ardently to their old identities and assumptions," complicit with the "hegemony that constructs them" while being ardently resistant "to the critical awareness that should help them to confront [hegemony]" (262). The net effect of "new" approaches that discredit previous approaches, for Anderson, is a reduction of student engagement. Thus,

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[14] For example, Lester Faigley writes of his 1992 monograph, *Fragments of Rationality*: "This book uses postmodern theory and theories of postmodernity to attempt to understand some of what has happened in composition studies since the 1960s and to address what I see as the most vexed question in composition studies – the question of the subject" (22).

Anderson offers an alternative to the composition classroom politics of difference Friend here represents, which Anderson considers more inclusive by embracing both past and present.

<div align="center">Ethics and Prevailing Rhetorics</div>

For Anderson, an ethical practice of writing is inherently political in that only through active participation will we begin to see ourselves reflected in the structures that govern us, but, Anderson writes, "these representations of democracy, like all specific content for long-repeated stories, must be argued for and established rhetorically" (278). Anderson applauds "the hopes of many theorists for a postmodern ethics," which she hopes might "translate the discontinuity and antifoundationalist vertigo of modern life into a strategy for subverting old totalities" – to clear spaces where "silenced voices may finally emerge" (261). However, she remains skeptical, citing many accomplished compositionists who have reported failing in their "efforts to engage students in critical explorations" of "questions their traditional assumptions suppress," or "to construct political selves in the face of disruptive difference and postmodern doubt" (Anderson 262). Anderson locates the failure of cultural critique on two points. First, "students often find the critical stance they are asked to adopt not just challenging but painful," (Anderson 262). Second, is the peril of disrespecting the "prevailing rhetoric of democracy" (Anderson 262). Anderson explains that if the goal is "a radical revision of the meaning of democracy," it makes little sense to begin with the "traditional documents and icons" that "embody the very flaws I want to expose" (262). In other words, we might as well leave tradition alone, and instead, work on new senses of ethics and politics in writing pedagogy.

Anderson describes writing ethics as pluralistic and *additive* – adding perspectives, rather than *subtractive* – replacing older perspectives with new ones. The additive approach opens the door to charges of relativism, which Anderson evades by incorporating judicial "precedence" into her political pluralism. Anderson explains, "precedent" is "in fact a form of traditional narrative," which saves pluralistic perspectives from "total disruption" by providing a starting point for the narrative, which avoids "Lyotardian amnesia," where the past disappears, and therefore, for Anderson, so too does our ability to act ethically (275). Thus, Anderson grounds an ethical (and necessarily pluralistic) practice in tradition, as a starting point for subsequent departures, rather than "an anarchic return to pure beginnings" (276). For Anderson, a "radical revision" must begin from a deep understanding of tradition, and thereby, to meet the audience where they are by speaking "to the audience that tradition had produced" (276).

Pointedly, Anderson criticizes advocacy classrooms which take a solutions-approach to conflict. Contrary to solutions, Anderson advocates for an analytical approach whereby students might examine the "difficulties faced by any attempt to create" solutions (277). Anderson suggests that by attending to "the struggles and unresolved issues" that inform an author's choices, students may come to understand authoritative, naturalized codes and texts as "confrontations with difficult and perhaps ever-contentious issues rather than final solutions" (278). As a result, Anderson claims "democratic life can come to be seen as negotiation rather than competition," and "accommodation to diversity can become a personal value because of its relevance to students' own identities and needs" (278). In other words, democracy is a matter of cooperation rather than competition for Anderson and should be engaged in that spirit.

Ethics and Empowerment

Anderson's pluralist ethics suggests that social and political critique must take into account "prevailing rhetorics" and seek to add new ethical perspectives that might afford a "new" order without first discrediting the prevailing one. Not unlike Anderson, Ellen Cushman shares a desire to re-vision the work of critical pedagogy to arrive at a more just and ethical writing classroom, but the problem, for Cushman, lies not in obscuring history but in obscuring everyday and local rhetorics by placing critical attention on celebrity and popular culture. Cushman implores writing pedagogy take "a deeper consideration of the civic purpose of our positions in the academy, of what we do with our knowledge, for whom, and by what means" (12). This would require, Cushman writes, that writing instructors shift "critical focus away from our own navels, Madonna, and cereal boxes to the ways in which we can begin to locate ourselves within the democratic process of everyday teaching and learning in our neighborhoods" (12). Cushman points to "the ways in which people use language and literacy to challenge and alter the circumstances of daily life" (12). "In other words," Cushman continues, "social change" is enabled when "daily interactions" and the "regular flow of events" are identified and "reflected upon" in an effort to transform them (12). Cushman suggest students spend more time reflecting on "the circumstances of daily life" to better understand how "daily interactions follow regular patterns of behavior" – "what sociologist Anthony Giddens terms 'routinization'" (12). Advocacy in the composition classroom belongs in the register of daily personal interactions, rather than at an abstract registers of mass culture. "With such a theory," Cushman writes, "we're less likely to paint ourselves as great 'liberators of oppressed masses'" (22-23).

Cushman criticizes compositionists who "believe that they can promote social change and empower students through critical literacy and emancipatory pedagogy" without bringing such grand and abstract ideas down to the level of local, everyday routines (22). Cushman refers to this tactic as "slippery discourse," (22). Cushman explains:

> This slippery discourse leads us to believe that we're all after the same ends: "enfranchising outsiders," having "social impact," creating a more "just society," offering a "liberating ideology," honing students" "awareness and critical consciousness," challenging "the oppressive system," "encouraging resistance," and of course, "interrogating dominant hegemony." (22)

Exactly "how these end products of critical pedagogy lead to social change and empowerment," Cushman continues, is not clear (22). In fact, Cushman points out "some scholars make no distinctions between social change and empowerment, as though to empower is to liberate, and to liberate is to produce social change" (22).

The "slippery discourse" of critical pedagogy obscures, for Cushman, "an equally slick assumption – social change and empowerment lead to some kind of collective action or resistance involving the masses of people we teach" (22). In other words, empowering students to critique culture does not necessarily lead to collective action or real social change. If social change is the end-goal, for Cushman, then writing pedagogy must work to politicize, collect, and mobilize students in concrete and ethical ways. This is something Cushman sees missing in the rarified air of the academy. Writing elsewhere, Lee Ann Carroll also takes issue with this "slick assumption," suggesting that engaging in cultural critique with "safe, academic politeness" does not "lead to real change," but

instead fits "neatly into current classroom structures," and ultimately, works "to produce the next labor force for late capitalism" (930). For Carroll, then, critical pedagogies that do not actively disrupt hegemony merely serve to further its agenda – such as creating "flexible" workers with the skills needed in the "next labor force" (930). This is, for me, the beginning of an ethical critique of a political position.

Both Cushman and Carroll take contemporaneous versions of critical writing pedagogy to task for failing to engage postmodern ethics in the account of the situated and specific nature of their pedagogical subjects, and further, for striking, too often, an abstract register above (or out of touch from) everyday lived experience. Cushman and Carroll improve upon critical pedagogy by overlapping writing ethics informed by postmodern and feminist theory. Cushman urges her readers to descend from "grand levels" of abstraction to seek the "the particular ways in which our teaching and research might contribute to students' abilities to take up their civic responsibilities once they leave our classrooms" (Cushman 22).

Carroll brings writing ethics explicitly to the point of rupture – the "dilemma" poststructuralist critique presents foundational discourse – that "all discourses are limited" with "no outside place to stand to judge" (930). The dilemma for writing is the loss of the omniscient perspective, or moral certitude. Carroll suggests ethics in the writing classroom to help students make choices about "what is harmful or what is good" through analysis and observation (930). Ethical judgment helps writers make informed choices where moral certitude is not granted. Carroll suggests that without developing some kind of postmodern ethical framework – given the fragmented and contradictory nature of postmodern reality – students risk "being paralyzed by competing discourses

and unable to make ethical choices" (930). Thus, Carroll offers ethics as a framework for the writing classroom with "no outside place to stand to judge" (930).

Ethics and Novelty

Contemporaneous to this discussion is the rise of internetworked writing, adding a further layer of conceptual space for writing pedagogy. One expectation of internetworked writing was the early, and somewhat exuberant, optimism of its liberatory potential. Frances V. Condon explains how this "exhilaration of novelty" requires constant critique by critical writing pedagogy since "advocacy of any nature always entails an ethical dimension" (39). Condon turns to ethics to situate technological questions in lived experience. Condon reminds her readers liberation is not an effect of "computer technology in the classroom" but "the labor of human hearts and minds," – "human workers" and not "machines" (39). In other words, for Condon, modes and media of writing will continue changing; however, the real value of classroom writing experience is the human work, the work of the heart – unmediated and unaugmented by technology.

Donna LeCourt similarly critiques technological enthusiasm in the classroom. LeCourt writes: "Although I no longer expect the revolution, I must admit that I still hold out hope that the Internet and new writing technologies might help us address social inequities and work toward social change" (676). LeCourt is an early adopter of technology, so she has a greater tolerance, perhaps, to adopting new technologies in a classroom and take advantage of their affordances. On the flip side of this equation are teachers who avoid technology gains where there are opportunities. And finally, LeCourt asks: "How do we keep our own presumptions about ethical action from distorting our

ability to see other possibilities?" (677). This is a form of Berlin's ideological critique, which LeCourt applies to values. Values as moral horizons of ethical action, but the problem LeCourt identifies occurs when the moral horizons become reductive, normalizing. What is it we lose by leaving hegemonic, normalizing practices unchallenged? Is this complicity?

At stake in another register, LeCourt asks: "Who gets to define the social ontology of cyberspace?" (689). On the menu is the transformative potential of new writing technologies. LeCourt ask if

> we, as teachers, align ourselves with those who wish to control its potential by examining the Internet only through already acceptable lenses, or are we willing to let the 'moral challenges' of the Internet prompt us to reexamine our own presumed ontologies – the implicit ethical frames, moral codes, and dearly held assumptions about writers, readers, texts, publishing, and circulation that come with them? (689)

Ethics and Discursive Agency

Feminisms and social justice are two ethical frames for LeCourt which present significant opportunities for those who choose to "reexamine our own presumed ontologies" in the composition classroom in relation to the "social ontology of cyberspace" (LeCourt 689). Of specific interest to me here is what LeCourt refers to as the "textual agency" afforded by internetworked writing and social media technologies. LeCourt points to earlier optimistic applications of writing technology which suggested new and social media might help composition "move beyond the realm of identity politics" and "to focus on how new forms of textuality allow us to rewrite our identities

as a form of social action" (688). However, LeCourt suggests that "even this postmodern understanding of identity" focuses "on the individual as the ethical/moral site that is uncomfortably similar to foundational approaches that presume universal virtue ethics" (688). These versions of ethics focus on the action (as judgment) of the situated writer, which LeCourt suggests, does not sufficiently account for the interrelated and con-constitutive nature of relationships and subjectivity. Thus, an "ethic of self," which LeCourt defines as "one's ability to act," must take into account not only "a writer's critical positions but must also include others" (688). "What the Internet provides" LeCourt explains, "is a public, fluid, hypertextually organized space where we might imagine texts performing such action rather than identities speaking to one another across difference" (688). In other words, while the discursive spaces of the Internet present opportunities to encounter difference, these encounters must be understood through rhetorical and ethical frames.

While Condon might acknowledge the truth of LeCourt's assessment of the Internet's ability to destabilize social ontologies through textual identities, Condon would suggest more emphasis on the market pressures playing out in these spaces. For Condon, then, an ethical writing pedagogy would better reflect an awareness of the "commodified space" in which it is found (38). Condon suggests writers must not only be able to write well, they need also to recognize and reflect on the ethics of the choices they made along the way. Condon explains:

> An ethical pedagogy is one that enables students to do more than "master" information and skills; an ethical pedagogy enables students to arrive at a critical understanding of the information and skills they are being called upon to know

and to make informed choices about whether, how, and where to use their knowledge. (38–39)

For Condon, an "ethical pedagogy prepares students" to "theorize and potentially to transform their lived realities" (39). Thus, Condon forwards in the pursuit of social justice a pedagogical approach that prioritizes the "soft" skills of ethical analysis and writerly reflection over the "hard" skills of technological mastery.

<center>Discourse Ethics</center>

The question remains, then, how students might learn to reflect upon their choices in ways that might "transform their lived realities" (Condon 39). Condon situates the answer in ethical reflection. Taking a slightly more political approach, Lisa M. Toner suggests transforming everyday realities might be accomplished more directly through overt political advocacy in the classroom (3). Toner describes her "writing instruction as activities in rhetorical ethics and in democracy" and encourages others to view theirs similarly (21). Toner acknowledges that advocacy "approaches have been criticized soundly for failing to account for the role of the writing teacher and for ignoring the complexities of pedagogical ethics in writing instruction" (3). Thus, Toner links her approach to James Berlin's ideological critique, assuming all classrooms are always already politically and ideologically vested regardless of instructor intent. Toner suggests she avoids sliding from instruction to indoctrination by establishing an "explicit a discursive methodology that encourages students to feel that their opposing views will be respected," which she terms "discourse ethics" (3).[15]

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[15] This term – also known as *communicative ethics* – is closely associated with European theorists Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel who separately develop their notion of *discourse ethics* in Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative (Markel 287). Mike Markel explains: "Communicative ethics changes the focus from the individual's thought

Toner presents discourse ethics as a "method" which positions "composition classrooms as sites of social change" where students and teachers regularly "reflect on how they construct themselves and how they are positioned by others as rhetorically ethical agents" (21). To encourage this "participatory critical discourse in the classroom," Toner suggests teachers position "their political advocacies" in "relation to their alternatives" (4). Toner realizes that her image of discourse ethics assumes equal participation from unequal players, consequently, she argues that "responsibility for respecting conflicting interpretive methods and political advocacies lies first with the writing teacher, then with students (4). However, for Toner, "the ethics of teachers' political advocacy depends less upon" the content than the "methods of effecting dialogue in the classroom to enable discussion and critique of competitive interpretive stances" (4). In the end, Toner concedes that there is no way "to have absolutely non-coercive discourse in actual writing classrooms," but discourse ethics "does provide a way to begin understanding how writing teachers can try to establish classroom discourse situations that avoid indoctrinating students into the ethical and political views of the teacher yet still engage students in critical discussion of everyday discourse practices" (20).

Toner suggests that "discourse ethics positions students and teachers not only to critique power relations," but also to "question the power relations and consequences of the classroom discussion itself" (20). Toner describes her notion of discourse ethics as "a

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processes to the process of open and free discourse among all interested parties" (287). Thus, "communicative ethics holds that a moral norm or action" is one "agreed to by all affected parties," which requires a person express their "views in a public forum. testing their validity as universal norms" (Markel 287). It remains unclear to me if Toner embraces the philosophical associations with her term, but much of her description of discourse ethics is in accord with Habermas' work.

critical method" that "foregrounds debate of ethical values and implied social relations" whose activities "in struggles to articulate respect despite, within, and opposition to differences" (20). Through this approach, Toner suggests "students and writing teachers become directly mindful that every language act defines how we should relate to each other and who we believe we ought to be" (21).

Catherine Chaput shares Toner's desire to develop an activist approach to writing pedagogy, which she strengthens by addressing criticism of the approach. Chaput confronts criticism raised by scholars identified with "third sophistic rhetoric," and specifically here, Michelle Ballif (53). Ballif charges activist pedagogies as "self-disclosing" of essentialized identities, which Chaput does not deny; however, for Chaput, the radical textualism of third sophistic rhetorics denies students "the possibility of responding from such positions" (53). For Chaput, Ballif's radical intellectualism "precludes the possibility of grounding any counterhegemonic action in an identity position," and such a "discursive strategy is marked by class privilege in that it fails to oppose institutionally oppressive machinations" (53).

Chaput turns to literary theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, to develop her position. For Chaput, reading through Spivak, "in order to speak with the hope of social transformation, an individual must locate him or herself – that is, disclose for whom he or she is (and is not) speaking" (59). Self-representation is unavoidable, Spivak suggests, and the ethics of representation requires that we "look at essentialisms, not as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of anything" (qtd. in Chaput 59). At stake for Chaput is a certain paralysis that follows from a radical "intellectualism," – "an academic dilemma" baring a person from

identifying with an essentialized subjectivity when "representation is the only means" by which students might begin to resist (59). From this defenseless high ground, Chaput explains, "institutions will continue to treat individuals as classed, gendered, raced, and sexed subjects," even as "a third sophistic rhetoric would deny them the possibility of responding from such positions" (53).

Chaput terms the intellectual state of paralysis here as an "ethics of intellectualism" which she opposes to her own "ethics of activism," which seeks the "conditions for agency that demand the possibility of a partial positioning-in-the-world" (58). In other words, if "writing can indeed effect change in our material lives," then writing pedagogy must "move the writing classroom beyond intellectual exercises and toward an ethic of activism that can effect material change" (57). To this end, Chaput argues "that rhetoric and composition instructors must seriously consider their different responsibilities to an ethics of intellectualism and to an ethics of activism" (58). But this an oversimplification of a deeper ethical question which remains to be addressed. Chaput argues, on my view, for the ethical priority of the ends, or social justice, while Ballif argues for the priority of the means – that occupying hegemonic subjectivities precludes real resistance. Chaput quotes a question from philosopher, Judith Butler: "Can the exchange of speech or writing be the occasion for a disruption of the social ontology of positionality?" (qtd in Chaput 57). For Chaput, grounded in Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism, the answer is a tentative *yes*; however, "postmodern representations of positionality in cooperation with a specifically Marxist standpoint" must work in concert to "move the writing classroom beyond intellectual exercises and toward an ethic of activism that can effect material change" (57).

Multiculturalism and Ethics

Chaput highlights the centrality of ethics to composition researcher-teachers

working toward social justice, foregrounding specifically, the problem of adopting

essential identities in order to render criticism from a speaking position. Laurie Grobman

raises the question of the effects of postmodern theory upon those essential identities and

multicultural perspectives they represent in composition studies. For Grobman, "the

postmodern rejection" of "progress" and objective moral "criteria" potentially diminish

the "ethical force" of "the concepts of oppression, racism, sexism, liberty, compassion,

and justice" when they are assumed to be "nothing more than constructions of a particular

individual, community, or culture's contingent belief system" (822). At stake, then for

Grobman is the apparent ethical dilemma critical pedagogues must confront when

reconciling "multiculturalism's ethical aims" with the "apparently relativistic

implications" of postmodern theory (822).

For Grobman the danger lies in relativism, and specifically, *ethical relativism*.

Grobman contends that "multicultural understanding and social cooperation" require

judgment; consequentially, assuming a relativist stance in a composition classroom

"precludes us from saying our values of justice, fairness, and equality are 'better' than

values of bigotry and hate" or assuming that writing instructors "ought to encourage anti-

racist, anti-sexist, anti-classist, and anti-homophobic attitudes" (822). In short, dialogue

requires ethical judgment, and "there is less chance for meaningful interaction between

cultures (globally, nationally, locally, individually) when multiculturalism is understood

as asserting that each culture should live as it sees fit" (822).

In the end, Grobman forwards what she terms "critical multiculturalism" – a critical response to "overly reductionist tendencies of the more benign versions" based on a "politics of difference" rather than pluralist politics that, when assumed reductively, "reinforce hegemonic, monocultural, and homogenizing structures and values" (825). In a composition classroom, Grobman suggests critical multiculturalism would critique "power relations that work to undermine efforts at equality and attempt to focus on and thus remedy the uneven distribution of goods, power, and access to knowledge" (825).

For my purposes here, it is useful to note that Grobman overlaps feminist notions of distributive justice in her formulation of critical multiculturalism. Advocates of distributive justice (such as Young and Friend above) advocate for social policies that support egalitarian principles and the equitable distribution of goods and services throughout society (cf. Young). Often, feminist distributive justice models are set against feminist equality models, a debate I will address fully later in this chapter. Important here is to note Grobman's argument is not entirely uncontroversial.

<center>Ethics and the Politics of Difference</center>

Mary Juzwik is another composition scholar who looks to the ethics grounding the politics of difference to inform her classroom practices. Juzwik draws upon the work of linguist and philosopher, Mikail Bakhtin, to develop a dialogic perspective of writing instruction that contrasts with Grobman's distributive justice approach. For Juzwik, "communication always occurs as a process of negotiation among contested positions, ideologies, and languages," and therefore, "meaning takes shape through the negotiation of difference" (542). On Juzwik's view, the important aspect of this dialogic model of meaning-making by negotiation of difference is Bakhtin's notion of answerability, which

"focuses on the everyday processes of becoming a certain kind of person and the good or harm that comes to oneself through responding to others in certain ways" (553; see also Lunsford "Refiguring"). Thus, rather than "focusing on the production of expanded possibilities for the self as in an ethics of difference," Juzwik privileges the rhetorical situation, and in particular, the response to others (553).

Another point of contention Juzwik highlights in contemporaneous versions of ethics and the politics of difference is a reduction commonly assumed through a neglect to develop "an ethical understanding of personhood" – a gap Juzwik suggests, citing linguist James Paul Gee, that is detrimental "to any pedagogical or research practice" concerned with literacy (539; Gee et al. 151–2). Juzwik suggests, a perspective "that treats individuals as moral agents with the capacity for good or harm – remains undeveloped in much sociocultural research" (539).

To suggest how such a perspective might be enacted in the composition classroom, Juzwik looks to the work of literacy specialist, Anne H. Dyson, who specifically draws upon ethics to describe a classroom modeled on the stage and students as "performers" engaged in a "civic identity play" of sorts with the purpose of soliciting a variety of responses (546). In sum, a "classroom imagined as a microcosm of citizenship in a democracy'" where students practice responding to one another (546). In other words, students interrogate the various identities that they claim or are ascribed to them by others. Juzwik suggests such practice might extend outside the classroom as a better ability to participate in the discourses of democracy. Ethics and rhetoric are of considerable help here – as would an understanding of Habermas' discourse ethics, which in general, are under theorized in composition scholarship.

Ethics and Cynicism in the Classroom

The composition scholarship I have covered thus far has tended to leave student "persons" undeveloped to better consider how ethics impact teachers and pedagogical judgment.[16] In response, Juzwik places the "person" in the center of her pedagogy, "developing an ethical understanding of personhood," and a teaching practice which "treats individuals as moral agents with the capacity for good or harm" (539). Juzwik represents, for my purposes here, the presumption of agency as fundamental to foundational and non-foundational senses of ethics, and this assumption that students are active agents in their education is a pedagogical strategy relying upon ethics to address apathy in the writing classroom.

Matthew A. Levy provides a counterpoint to the kind of classroom advocacy Juzwik, here, represents, as well as a direct response to Chaput's essay above. Levy argues that advocacy pedagogies may succeed in peaking student interest but offer little in terms of solutions to the problems students surface. Levy suggests endless analysis of problems without recourse to action breeds cynicism. A more effective strategy is to provide "effective ways of resisting," that is, Levy writes, "if resistance could be successful" (357). Levy specifically takes aim at Berlin and composition classrooms engaging in cultural and ideological critique built upon Berlin's historical materialist development of writing. For Levy, cultural and political critique-centered composition

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[16] One towering exception to this general observation is Lester Faigley's monograph, *Fragments of Rationality*, which argues "that the production of a student subject is a chief outcome of a course in composition. The molding of these subjects results not so much from the imposition of power from above as from the effects of an array of discourse practices, which in part are set out in textbooks and which serve to justify and perpetuate the discipline of composition" (23). A second set of exceptions might be those compositionists taking up virtue ethics in the writing classroom (see also Anderson; Bizzell "The Politics").

courses fail students when providing a "technology of seeing that reveals the evils of contemporary capitalism" but "does not give them the power they would need to overturn it" (357). Levy writes: "Before the class, they have no way to overturn capitalism. After the class, they have no way to overturn capitalism; but if the course is successful, they leave the class with an increasing resentment toward a world that gives them no choice but to participate in evil" (357). At stake for Levy is an unwitting amplification of resistance and cynicism resulting from being complicit and inactive when confronted with systemic problem – precisely the kind of problem that requires collective action. For Berlin, "rhetoric is regarded as always already ideological" which "means that any examination of a rhetoric must first consider the ways its very discursive structure can be read so as to favor one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions" (477).

Levy remains unconvinced of the pedagogical value of an approach that inevitably turns upon the cultural and political beliefs students arrive with. In other words, you cannot "convince an audience while showing open contempt for its entire belief system" (357). In this sense, Levy charges writing pedagogies engaged in cultural critique are unethical to the degree they fail to instruct students to resist oppressive power relations, and further, to the degree that they do not consider it their responsibility to support student betterment in general.

Compassion and Writing Ethics

As a long-standing custom, *JAC* invites other scholars to provide brief formal responses to full-length articles published in the journal. Lisa Langstraat who shares "Levy's concern with employing pedagogies that ultimately increase students' cynicism"

offers a direct response to Levy's ethical criticism (279). Langstraat notes that "tensions between ideology critique and subjectivity," have "long vexed cultural studies scholars and proponents of social epistemic rhetoric"; however, on her view the "burning issue" is "how to respond to this cynicism," and more specifically, how cynicism might provide "teaching/learning opportunities" to "connect theory and practice, hegemonic power relations and human agency, reason and emotion" (279). In other words, cynicism is a risk worth taking considering the importance of ideological critique to critical thinking.

A point of distinction that Langstraat brings to the discussion is an expanded sense of cynicism. Levy keeps this term in a pessimistic register denoting a belief that people are essentially self-serving and even incapable of altruism. On another register, cynicism suggests the beliefs and practices of a school of ancient Greek philosophers, among whom Diogenes is best known. Langstraat writes: "I'd like to create the learning conditions that foster not just hostility and outrage, but cynicism (in Diogenes' sense)" and "compassionate understanding about how the Disneyfication of history and humanity is an oppressive source of suffering" (283). Thus, Langstraat places "compassion" opposite "postmodern cynicism on the emotional spectrum" (283). By drawing upon Aristotle's understanding of "compassion as perhaps the central political emotion," Langstraat suggests teachers might displace cynicism in the classroom by teaching compassion, which "builds solidarity and recognition between otherwise isolated human beings" by engaging with one another at the level of "ethical beliefs" (283).

Deborah Holdstein expresses a concern that perhaps composition studies has too much solidarity in what Langstraat's terms "ethical beliefs," creating a culture bearing considerable *ideological bias*. Holdstein suggests, "ideology is at the center of our work

as rhetors and as teachers of writing, ideologies we do not examine" (16). This returns us to Berlin's assertion twenty- years earlier that "every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology," (23). Holdstein turns Berlin's insight back upon composition studies suggesting "the same must be assumed for every critical act, every rhetorical stance that assumes power and authority" (17). Holdstein asserts that too often compositionist "beg or leave unchallenged the question of ideology in our own teaching and publication" (16). And this is played out in very public places of composition casting the (moral and ethical) projects of composition in doubt. To illustrate her point, Holdstein points to her experiences of the overwhelming "Christian bias" in composition culture.

<div align="center">Moral Bias in Composition Scholarship</div>

Holdstein argues that despite "our stance" as the "magnanimous keepers of the composition-as-democracy flame," compositionist have been "hardly 'self-conscious' about our principles and practice regarding religious, Christian ideologies that are transparently assumed and unquestioned" (16, 14). In other words, while presenting "itself as the champion of all things pedagogically democratic, composition studies has permitted the canonization of a singular, religious tradition as the underlying source to which its morals and values are exclusively attributed" (Holdstein 15). Along these lines, I might expand Berlin's ideological assumption also to suggest that all pedagogy is already imbricated in moral and ethical frameworks. Through her interrogation of Christian bias, Holdstein highlights a moral presumption that runs counter to a discipline which purports to be multicultural and inclusive. "Consequently," Holdstein writes, "we must question the ideological practices" of composition studies as a whole, particularly its journals, to ensure composition scholarship does not overnaturalize its values or

assume "ideological immersion in dominant religious practice and assumptions" that

preclude the participation of Others in truly multicultural advocacy work (18).

Holdstein points to a well-known 1989 CCCC Chair's Address delivered by

Andrea Lunsford, in which Lunsford suggests, "we are dialogic, multi-voiced,

heteroglossic. Our classroom practices enact what others only talk about; they are sites

for dialogues and polyphonic choruses" (qtd. in Holdstein 13). Holdstein suggests

Lunsford describes a moral "high bar" that "composition studies fails to meet" (14).

Holdstein explains:

> However sincere Lunsford's words – and they are – and however sincere our
>
> willingness to identify ourselves as enacting them, we must clearly see them as an
>
> ethical and value-laden benchmark by which to measure ourselves as
>
> compositionists. (14)

Holdstein cautions compositionists from reading Lunsford's words as "summative

praise that permits us to rest on laurels we haven't really bothered to earn" (14).

Holdstein highlights a fundamental bias and unwillingness to acknowledge this bias as a

central ethical and moral challenge to writing pedagogy – the failure of composition

scholarship to account sufficiently for its own moral and ideological presumptions while

parading as a champion of diverse values.

Holdstein highlights a pervasive Christian ideological bias salting the soil of

composition to remind composition scholarship that the work of attaining an earned

dialogic, multi-voiced, heteroglossic stance is still ahead. In a similar move, Jonathan

Alexander brings to his readers' attention heteronormative and gender biases which are

assumptions a composition classroom that might be discussed in terms of what he calls

sexual literacy. Alexander describes sexuality as an aspect of identity around which many important social tensions are dramatized. Alexander's Foucault-inflected pedagogy presents the body as "a site of contested meanings" upon which the "controlling narratives" of normative ethics transmitted by dominant discourse sort out what is "right" or "wrong" at any given historical milieu (19). One way to reflect upon the mechanisms of power and its manifold effects, Alexander suggests, is sexuality. Sexual literacy, then, requires critical reflection on material, embodied experiences in terms of discourse. Alexander argues for critically engaging "the stories we tell about sex and sexuality to probe them for controlling values and for ways to resist, when necessary, constraining norms" (5).

<div align="center">Sexuality and Ethics</div>

In his monograph, *Literacy, Sexuality, Pedagogy: Theory and Practice for Composition Studies*, Alexander develops an argument for centering "sexual literacy" in the composition classroom for all students – not just sexually marginalized students. For Alexander, discussions of "literacy should consider issues of sexuality in much the same way that we, in composition studies at least, have grown accustomed to considering issues of race, ethnicity, and gender and their intersections with literacy and discourse" (64). Alexander points out that all students already "participate in literacies that are densely inflected by issues of sexuality," and he advocates a "critical pedagogy that takes sexuality as a key and focal interest for the development of literate citizens" (64). Alexander sees this move as moving beyond an "inclusive" strategy of diversity to present a practice through which students might begin to critique the constructedness of sexual identities. Thus, for Alexander, sexual literacy is a "critical sexual literacy" that is

"vitally important for people to understand themselves, their relations with others, and their possibilities for meaningful self-articulation and social connection" (63).

In the sense that Alexander's critical sexual literacy is vested in the situated and relational nature of communication, as well as the capacities of persons to affect and be affected, Alexander describes a *sexual ethics*. This helps explain why Alexander explicitly centers ethics in his composition classrooms. He confesses to an affinity for "the *ethical* dimensions of Foucault's work," which helped him understand "we are asking students to consider densely ethical questions when we ask them to consider their own literacy practices, not just their sexual literacies" (Alexander 208). By "densely ethical" Alexander highlights the any number of nearly infinite judgments one must make from moment to moment. In everyday life, these judgments might hover beneath one's attention, Alexander suggests that by reflecting in classrooms on ethical questions, such as "in the comportment of one's body in relation to others, in the representation of one's desires for others, in the stories that we tell about sex, sexuality, sexual identity, and intimacy, we are grappling most profoundly with ethical issues, with relations between selves and subjects" (208).

Alexander's ethics of "selves and subjects" parallels an important theme in Foucault's later work exploring the care of self. For Foucault, ethics is "the deliberate practice of liberty," pointing to Hellenic Greece as an example of liberty practiced in the "basic imperative: Care for yourself" (*Final* 4–5). In his later works, Foucault spends a great deal of time exploring how one might care for oneself as deliberate acts of freedom and self-making. Ethics, then, for Foucault, represent a set of practices, or techniques of the self, for developing "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself," a

"*rapport à soi*," suggesting "how the individual is supposed to constitute himself (sic) as a moral subject of his own actions" ("On the Genealogy" 263). Foucault suggest we must distinguish between "acts and codes," or the "real behavior [*conduites*] of people in relation to the moral code [*prescriptions*]" ("On the Genealogy" 263). That is, for Foucault ethics looks to "real behavior" to understand the effects of normalizing discourse (*prescriptions*) upon subjects.

Alexander ties his development of sexual literacy to Foucault's ethics, and in particular, the care of self. Both Foucault and Alexander are concerned with how subjectivities are discursively created, and both place resistance to the constitutive effects of hegemonic and normalized discourse in care of self. Alexander turns to John Champagne to explain how "this care of the self" "represents the attempt by the (subjugated) subject to work within cultural forms of subject production, countering the practices of modern disciplinary subject formation through what Foucault terms practices of the self" (qtd. in Alexander 208). In other words, sexual literacy provides a critical framework with which to interrogate the codes, scripts, and mores that inform dominant discourse and perspectives regarding sexuality, gender, and other markers of identity. But importantly, literacy implies material actions, and "Foucault suggests that such practices ought to move toward freedom," toward an "ethical practice of self-government" (John Champagne qtd. in Alexander 208).

For Alexander, to some degree, to know yourself "in contemporary Anglo-American society is to know yourself sexually," and this requires we develop our sexual literacy (208). He develops this idea by drawing upon Foucault's work in ethics, whose own interest in ethics is pointed toward increasing the capacities of individuals to

discover new pleasures, to detach "oneself from what is accepted as true" and to seek "other rules," to change received values" by thinking otherwise, "to do something else, to become other than what one is" (Foucault qtd. in Alexander 209). Alexander acknowledges that this is a tall order for one semester in the classroom, but at the very least, by centering a critical sexual literacy in the classroom, "we may at least become more critically cognizant of what we are" (209). Thus, by weaving critical sexual ethics into the discourse of composition scholarship and practices, Alexander hopes to normalize discussions of sexuality: "Sexuality isn't something particularly 'special' we're going to talk about. It's simply another issue, another important aspect of the human experience that deserves our critical and rhetorical attention" (209).

Alexander addresses a heteronormative bias in composition pedagogy scholarship by inviting Foucault's notion of ethics into the composition classroom as a form of self-care through sexual literacy. Paul Cook is another compositionist who has remarked on a bias underscoring composition scholarship, and in doing so, expands the conversation here to introduce how a Deleuzian ethics might be enacted in the classroom.

Writing Ethology

Paul Cook suggests that composition scholarship has inherited from René Descartes and "Western epistemology before and since" an "epistemological ontology" which privileges conscious beings over non-conscious ones, asserting "it is in the act of thinking that one's existence as a subject-in-the-world is enacted" (772). For Cook, the detrimental effects of prioritizing consciousness and naturalizing this metaphysical assumption contributes to what he terms the "identity imperative" of composition studies (760).

The metaphysical assumption Cook refers to rests in Descartes' famous first step in the locating of human knowledge, the famous dictum: "I think therefore I am" (17). However, this thinking, Cook observes, has been turned inward to precipitate a crisis resulting in composition's "identity imperative," by which Cook means the "ongoing process(es) of disciplinary demarcation" (760). Cook grounds this observation in Karen Kopelson's earlier call for compositionists to "leave our identity crisis behind" and put an end to "our disciplinary indulgence," which she describes as a tendency to "preoccupy ourselves with ourselves" (qtd. in Cook 774-5; see also Kopelson). Following Kopelson's line of thought, Cook explains the problem with a "proclivity for self-examination" is that it distracts scholars from "taking up other critical concerns" or making "more innovative and far-reaching forms of knowledge" (qtd. in Cook 775). At stake, then, for Cook is a reductive tendency to "to conflate disciplinarity and professionalism" in an "almost neurotic self-questioning" manner by fetishizing our "rethinking the discipline" (760; Gallagher qtd. in Cook 760). In other words, in answering the question of *what composition is* (ontology), we reify old disciplinary models and obscure the more important question of *what composition might do* – what writers and writing might yet do (ethics).

Thus, Cook arrives at an ethics through the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza via Gilles Deleuze to describe the detrimental effects of Cartesian bias on writing pedagogy (cf. Deleuze *Spinoza*). Cook suggests the identity crisis starts with the question: "What is rhetoric and composition?" (758). Cook traces the question back to the 1966 Dartmouth conference in which the "American side" of the assembly pursued the question "What is English?" (758; see also Harris). Imported with this simple question are problematic

metaphysical assumptions about the nature of reality, here Cartesian. Cook laments, "these presuppositions have shaped the conditions of possibility for how we encounter and do writing pedagogy in rhetoric and composition studies" (758). This Cartesian bias structures reason over irrationality and darkness, and mind over body, which should bring to mind Ellsworth's feminist critique of the rational bias of critical pedagogy this chapter began with. Cook suggests the Cartesian bias forms an agonistic and hierarchical framework enabled by domination of marginalized forces by hegemonic and normalizing ones (cf. Foucault *History*; hooks). However, fortunately, Spinoza offers a promising direction for ethics which avoids Cartesian bias – *ethology*.

Drawing upon Deleuze's reading of Spinoza's *Ethics*, Cook offers "ethology" as a frame which emphasizes the body and lived experience, and in so doing, "displaces consciousness as the privileged category through which an individual exists and acts" (772). Elsewhere, Deleuze explains Spinoza models his ethics on *ethology* – studies which "define bodies, animals, or humans by the affects they are capable of" (*Spinoza* 125). In other words, Spinoza defines "a human being" not by its "form," "organs," or "functions," "and not as a subject either," but by *what it can do* (*Spinoza* 124). Assuming we do not yet know what writing, writers, or even college writing instruction might be capable of – since we cannot claim to have exhausted the generative capacities of these acts; therefore, it is critical that our reflective capacities and pedagogical apparatuses not foreclose upon future possibilities and yet-unknown capacities of the body. Elsewhere, Deleuze explains the stakes of ethology through Friedrich Nietzsche: "Perhaps the body is the only factor in all spiritual development," and consciousness merely a function in a subordinate relation to a "superior body" (qtd. in Deleuze, *Nietzsche* 39). In other words,

a Cartesian bias assumes a fundamental division between a "dumb" body and a "smart" consciousness, privileging consciousness as the site of human development when, in fact, bodily capacities, the ability to move and be moved, is the privileged location of both ethics and potential human transformation.

Thus, Cook, following Deleuze and Spinoza, points to a founding presupposition of Western epistemology privileging what *we think* (to think is *to be*) over what we *can do*. This explains why Cook takes aim at the normally celebrated propensity for composition scholarship to privilege self-reflection, which in this sense, orchestrates an "exclusionary logic that engineers" an identity crisis resulting in the reification of received, logocentric models privileging thinking over bodily affective capacities. For Cook, an ethological frame understands writers not as particular *beings* (writing subjects), concerned with ontological questions, such as, what is writing? What is a writer? Rather, an ethology of writing concerns itself with the dynamic assemblages of affects that agents (writing and writers) exercise in moving others or being moved by others, pursuing questions of what new affective capacities (ability to move and be moved) might writers or writing yet develop?

Cook offers a "therapy" for his "diagnosis" of compositions identity crisis in the form of an ethological pedagogy, which "provokes and emphasizes capacities to affect and to be affected" (778). Affective capacity, the capacity for one to move and be moved, is not knowable in advance, and therefore, as Deleuze explains elsewhere, an ethological orientation necessitates a "long affair with experimentation," to understand what one is truly capable of (*Spinoza* 125). Given that "no one knows ahead of time the affects one is capable of," Cook's concern for "conventional approaches" naturalizing a privileged

consciousness is a plausible one; and given this opacity and the understanding "that conventional pedagogies have the capacity to unnecessarily circumscribe what pedagogy can do," one might argue that a Cartesian bias in writing pedagogy places our intellectual future at stake (776).

Two Registers of Ethics

Jeff Pruchnic identifies another bias within composition scholarship, which he describes as a "liberal bias" privileging activist, "politically-minded" pedagogies and displacing those exploring critical theory (57). Pruchnic introduces what he terms the "two registers" of ethics of "composition studies pedagogy" emerging from the convergence of English studies beginning in 1960s America (58). The registers emerge, Pruchnic explains, with the "historical integration of critical theory into politically-minded composition studies pedagogy" and subsequent "rejection of whatever remained of the discipline's traditional attention to aesthetics of the Arnoldian humanist type in favor of the role English studies education" (57). As a result, Pruchnic suggests competing senses of ethics emerge: one concerned with "the impact of schooling on student subjectivities" and another focused on integrating "training in political judgment, democratic citizenship, and social justice" (57).

The "two registers" of ethics evolve, Pruchnic explains, into the contemporaneous applications of ethics as either the work of "shaping student subjectivities" – often manifested as virtue ethics (cf. Bizzell, "The Politics"; Booth, "The Ethics"; Kinneavy), or alternatively, the "maintenance or challenging of social systems and popular sentiments" – often integrated in advocacy pedagogies emphasizing social justice (cf. Ellsworth; Lunsford; Friend) (58). It is this later group, the advocacy group, that prompts

Pruchnic to take up his pen. For Pruchnic, the focus on "revealing the ideological investments" of dominant and normative discourse and the "concomitant creation of students who might resist these codes and thus take part in inspiring progressive political change," form what he terms the "'liberal bias' of composition studies pedagogy" (64).

Liberal Bias and Ethics

Liberal bias, normalized and obscured in the everyday operations of writing instruction fails, for Pruchnic, in the assumption that "critical consciousness" is "inherently liberatory" or "necessarily leads, in a lockstep fashion, to more progressive political or ethical behavior by students" (75). Instead, as Langstraat and Levy contend, such assumptions more often result in frustration and apathy. Thus, Pruchnic suggests that rather than privileging the exercise of "critical consciousness," composition pedagogy scholarship might take up the "two registers" of writing ethics, to understand how these foci might work together toward more effective liberatory ends. The place to start, for Pruchnic, lies in analysis and reflection on "the distinction between students' belief structures or ethical frameworks and what the types of persuasion and communication they may have to forward their agendas" (75). In other words, an ethical writing pedagogy concerned with liberatory work should illuminate the dissonances and consonances between student value systems and those undergirding cultural texts – not diminish them.

Pruchnic provides an example of how the current review arrived at a more nuanced view of ethics. Pruchnic's "two registers" – subjectivity-focused and political – correspond roughly to what are here termed questions of *tradition* and *social justice* encountering ethics. In effect, Pruchnic elides the important writing ethics work of

compositionists focused on professionalization and research methods pedagogy, and he does not specifically identify scholars working from the direction of postmodern theory who have contributed enormously to ethical models of writing. My project represents an effort to collect the many schemas and applications of ethics, such as Pruchnic, into a more comprehensive collection.

<div align="center">Writing Ethics and the Social Ecology</div>

T.R. Johnson is a compositionist whose work with writing ethics overlaps with Pruchnic's project by exploring the tensions between student development and classroom political advocacy. Johnson endorses analytic and descriptive analysis as a "way of life" that produces through "continuous unmasking and dismantling" of ideological investments and underlying value systems "a subject highly energized, charged with desire for ethical, intellectual activism," engaged "with broader social movements" (535). In other words, Johnson suggests that student development and political advocacy are concomitant, and any separation of the "development of rhetorical abilities from the development of the self" only serves "to undermine both projects" (537).

Johnson suggests that "the development of writing abilities means the development of the sorts of rhetorical skills that are, in turn, tools for devising a link between self and other, tools that allow, in turn, for increasingly enhanced ethical sensitivity and sophistication" (537). Johnson continues:

> This fusion of rhetoric and ethics, of course, is as old as Quintilian and as common in composition studies, as the 1950s emphasis on citizenship, the 1960s and 70s politicization of the classroom, the shift to multicultural concerns in the 1980s and 90s, even the rise of service-learning in recent years, all of which imply

what Cooper would call an ecological vision of writing, the writer as never a
singular source but always linked with others throughout his or her development.
(537)

Thus, Johnson suggests personal development is inextricable from the social-
political matrices in which writing practices are found, and in fact, these social aspects of
writing, which rhetoric and ethics are deeply invested, for Johnson, are "the
quintessential stuff of personal growth" (537). In other words, Johnson sees writing ethics
as an analytical framework with which students might interrogate the various social,
political, and ideological investments within a writing ecology. This is a position close to
Pruchnic's in that engaging in ethical analysis affords writers opportunities to describe
and reflect on the various identities and implied values of these subjectivities in
discourse, to become more critical of the co-constitutive nature of authority.

<center>Non-Anthropocentric Ethics of the Other</center>

Pruchnic describes how the consolidation of English departments beginning in the
1960s as a rejection of traditional "Arnoldian humanist" perspectives "in favor of the role
English studies education" resulted in the importing and naturalizing of many extra-
disciplinary assumptions about the nature of subjectivity, ethics, and politics (Pruchnic
75). Similarly, Johnson highlights the social, constructionist view of writing pedagogy,
which privileges the embedded and interconnected nature of writing in contrast to neo-
Romantic notions of the individual author. Part of this drift away from traditional notions
of humanities, many composition scholars have increasingly explored the implications of
non-anthropocentric and posthuman theory upon writing ethics (cf. Bizzell, "Beyond";
Davis; Fleckenstein).

In his spirited review of Diane Davis' monograph, *Inessential Solidarity: Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations*, Marc C. Santos takes aim at the ethics of a discipline that professes a commitment to the Other while engaging in scholarly and professional practices that clearly deprecate this relationship. Santos argues "the 'first' task of rhetoric (and/or philosophy) – responsibly attending to the obligation and response-ability" (773). His argument, like Davis', is grounded in the Emmanuel Levinas' ethics, but Santos takes issue with Davis' extension of response-ability to an Other to non-anthropocentric concerns. Santos acknowledges the importance of extending human moral communities to include non-humans, writing "I recognize the counterargument that until we exorcize our anthropocentric ghosts, we are unlikely to change the default self-centeredness of the animal who votes" (777). Yet, he questions the ethical priority Davis assigns developing non-anthropocentric senses of ethics for writing pedagogy when, Santos suggests, the discipline at large so obviously deprecates humans already included its moral community.

Santos suggest "our institutional commitment must be to advocating for response-ability – and honoring the [moral] Law requires we rethink long-standing [ethical] laws governing tenure, and promotion" (780). Santos continues, "our books (and book reviews) must be written. But, if we aspire to hold ourselves to become an ethical discipline, can writing (as inscription, manifestation, betrayal) be our first priority?" (780). Here Santos appears to link Davis' radical textualism, associated with so-called third sophistic scholars, with her non-anthropocentric development of ethics. In other words, Santos appears concerned that Davis' writing ethics abandon material, lived experience and human-centered concerns for discursive ones. Instead of retreating into discursive concerns, Santos suggests "our current publication practices require conscious

effort" (780). To accomplish this, Santos suggests "emphasizing more dialogic communicative practices – at a more assertive disciplinary and institutional insistence – is the ethical path to overcoming the atomistic procedures and epistemological preferences written by history" (780). Put plainly, "we must insist on practices that force scholarship to be for others, rather than merely with them" (Santos 780). Santos argues for a more ethological understanding of writing ethics as a method of developing new capacities for composition scholarship to affect and be affected by material and embodied practices that transform the discipline into a more ethical, and ultimately, humane endeavor.

In the end, Santos seems to argue for a get-your-own-house-in-order-first approach to Other-oriented ethics, writing "there are times when, for the sake of the neighbor (a human), I have to prioritize her suffering over the suffering of the other (a cat). Such prioritization strikes me as, if not a universal truism, then at least a proposition worthy of staking an entire ethical philosophy" (778). This ethical philosophy, for Santos, provides the framework for re-visioning what compositionists might do. Writing ethics, then, must strive for ethical ends. Santos offers a set of ethical outcomes circumscribing the "field of battle" – "the future of rhetoric invests itself in ensuring that institutional, social, cultural, and political systems create opportunities for agents to respond, to engage alterity, and to make choices, free from the tyranny of fascism, prejudice, pain and death" (777).

Curator Comments: Writing as the Practice of Freedom

One of my interests in the scholarship included in this collection is their work in defining classroom spaces and cultures in more ethical terms. In particular, the scholarship here takes an active interest in the role of ethics in the formation and

politicization of discursive identities in the composition classroom. This work is critical to democracy because, as Ellsworth suggests, in a "racist society and its institutions," by which she means the United States, marginalized identities and their respective voices are elided by dominant discourse and not given "equal weight and legitimacy" (94). Further exasperating the situation are patriarchal assumptions rooted in a pernicious rationalism pervading critical pedagogy, which is unavoidable because, as Ellsworth suggests, "critical pedagogues are always implicated in the structures they are trying to change" (101).

Much of the scholarship here confronts bias underwriting the teaching of college writing. Holdstein points to the naturalization of Christian bias at all levels of the discipline. Alexander confronts heteronormativity, Mack points to class bias, Pruchnic draws attention to liberal bias, and Santos critiques Davis' critique of anthropocentric bias. I gather from these ethical encounters, and others, the beginnings of an analytic for describing *values*. Ethics, then, provides a set of terms and methods for descriptive critique of hegemonic discourse. These scholars have turned these methods back on composition scholarship to surface the many biases still actively operating in classrooms and professional discourse.

At stake in this collection of texts, for me, is an ethical critical pedagogy that might "account fully for institutional structures of oppression and domination" (Friend 549). Friend looks to Iris Marion Young's urban ethics as a model for the classroom that might serve as a more egalitarian model of education. Anderson points to "prevailing rhetorics" and suggests that any change must include, and not alienate, dominant perspectives. Cushman draws upon use of Anthony Giddens' term "routinization" – as

"daily interactions" that "follow regular patterns of behavior," believing that systematic change occurs in the everyday (Cushman 22).

For me, the text collected here suggest representation is a fundamental ethical concern for writing pedagogy. Ethical representation, like ethical responsibility, implies a deep interconnection between writers and the things they write about. For Chaput, representation presents a crisis of resistance, posed by textualist readings of identity and difference through a radical "intellectualism," precipitating "an academic dilemma" baring a person from identifying with an essentialized subjectivity when "representation is the only means" by which students might begin to resist (59). In other words, by identifying as "gay," one establishes one's identity in contrast to the privileged identity marker "straight," and thus, introduces a binary opposition of which "gay" is the subordinated term.

Returning then to writing as the practice of freedom, I arrive at an idea that seems a bit frightening. If writing pedagogy is always already ideological and morally loaded, how might I teach writing in a manner that does not diminish the writers in my classrooms through the unconscious enforcement of personal and professional biases, or by pre-critically imposing hegemonic norms upon students? This is a question I cannot answer, and neither do the scholars collected here fully. However, I want to point out that it is through ethical analysis that the scholars above have critiqued patriarchal bias of critical pedagogy, and the many other naturalized biases operating quietly in the discourse of composition scholarship. In other words, reading the assumptions of composition scholarship through an ethical lens, in effect writing as an ethical practice, provides a set of concepts and practices for practicing writing instruction in a more

inclusive and empowering manner. This work necessarily invokes transgression, and therefore, benefits from a proximity to ethics. As a writing teacher, I am profoundly inspired by hooks, and like hooks, I aspire to create in my writing classroom "a space of radical openness" where students and myself are "able to learn and grow without limits" – or at least limits that invite transgression (hooks 207). This transgressive work, which I believe this collection of texts suggests, is ethical work. It is the work of teaching writing as an ethical practice. hooks explains:

> In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond the boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (207)

It is here in the "space of radical openness" that I hope to create through my adoption of the practices and concepts of moral philosophy, a space afforded by attending to ethics in which I see clearly, now, the emergence of a new, and important, ethical question: What might writers or writing yet do?

CHAPTER 6: WRITING BETWEEN THE LINES

Foucault discovered a process that he came to call "normalization," a narrowing and impoverishment of human possibilities.

Bernauer and Mahon, *The Ethics.*

In Chapter 6, I explain what a few, fundamental insights my research into writing ethics mean for my own teaching practice and writing pedagogy. How has my research into writing ethics changed how I do writing pedagogy? I describe how my understanding of writing as an ethical practice informs my approach to teaching writing, and I describe what questions remain, for me, for writing ethics.

Layering Ethics Upon the Rhetorical Situation

To some degree, the rhetorical turn for composition studies drives an increasing emphasis on the writing situation and provides new, spatial coordinates to the writing situation. In my way of thinking, two dimensional representations of writing as mechanical and moral encounter a third, rhetorical dimension, a small universe it turns out, which brings a host of descriptive and analytic capacities to the scene of writing. This increased attention to the rhetorical situation opens the scene of writing, adding depth and dimension to earlier representations and models of writers and writing.

One effect of emphasizing rhetoric in writing pedagogy is to highlight the specificity and the complexity of the writing situation – the situated and interrelated aspects of writers and writing. My argument, then, is that even this expanded view of writing as rhetorical is alarmingly partial when rhetoric and writing are assumed to be *amoral*. While the rhetorical situation deepens our understanding of the scene of writing, it is essentially static, synchronic. Whereas the practices and concepts of ethics bring to bear upon the rhetorical situation larger social, cultural, and historical forces at play in the

moment. Ethics affords, if you will, a diachronic view of discourse, as "doing" discourse, which further increases the perceived complexity of the writing situation by focusing critical attention on what writers are *doing* with their writing. While considering the rhetorical situation points to purpose and exigence, and even rhetorical *ethos*, I suggest these elements take on far greater depth and richness when considered through ethics.

Writing considered through rhetoric, then, provides a partial view (as are all views, I imagine), and my contention is that it is a partial view of limited application in that it does not sufficiently foreground the values and relationships underwriting the rhetorical moment. For me, thinking of writing aside from morality and ethics is something like thinking of running a race without rules or a stopwatch. This is essentially the complaint with which I arrive at this project: I have been teaching students to race without first properly setting up the rules of the game.

The Ethical Limits of Writing Pedagogy

I need to point out what I want to suggest by "setting up the rules." I don't mean to imply writing instructors should privilege and enforce rules, nor should we ignore them; rather, I want to suggest the rules of discourse ought to be "set up" as provisional, moral limits that might legitimately be transgressed. For example, teachers might "set up" grammar and spelling rules as representing limits of intelligibility, rather than social or moral prohibitions whose transgression signals a lack of propriety or low character. While an emphasis on rules might appeal to current-traditional, or in my terms moral fundamentalist, writing pedagogy, compositionists generally agree rule-based approaches to writing instruction are less effective than pedagogical approaches that do not explicitly privilege rules (see Hillocks).

Rules are made to be broken, as the popular adage instructs, but this is, of course, too simple. Rules, as I present them to my classes, represent limits normalized by hegemonic interests. This is not to assert rules are necessarily bad; rather, rules need to be understood as social and historical constructs, not natural laws, and as such, "good" writers test, and even transgress, some naturalized rules of discourse in order to achieve some effect in their writing. For example, a prominent moral prohibition in writing pedagogy might be phrased "thou shalt not plagiarize." And yet, as Howard's analysis of patchwriting suggests, the moral line between plagiarizing and patchwriting is not all that clear. Thus, patchwriting performed between the lines of moral prohibitions might actually enhance one's research ethos by demonstrating a transparent or a synthetic approach to scholarship; however, as students remind me nearly every semester, the lines between synthesizing and stealing drifts according to the social, cultural, technological, and historical specificity of any given moment. In other words, even the universally recognized moral imperatives of academic integrity are moving targets, and as such, can not be assumed to be given. That is, the rules of discourse must be understood as provisional even when they appear natural and universal. When students and teachers assume rules are unassailable facts of discourse, conventions take the shape of norms and standards to which compliance is demanded and resistance diminished. Thus, I present the conventions and rules of discourse in my classrooms as contested sites of interpretation (inviting ethics) rather than universal, golden standards (prescribing morality).[17]

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[17] Certainly, my desire for students to transgress the rules of discourse and to challenge social propriety would make many experienced writing teachers uncomfortable. I acknowledge that this is a problematic position – one which presents at least as much risk as reward. For example, Candace Spigelman suggests that "If, on the one hand, writing

So how do I put this into action? How exactly has my knowledge of what composition scholars are doing with ethics changed the way I teach college writing? What might this look like in a classroom? This is the direction I want to head as I close out this project, but first, I will begin by describing how ethics and writing sit together in my praxis.

Ethics in Praxis

I describe my writing pedagogy as having borrowed two fundamental assumptions from my work in ethics. First, from Marilyn Cooper I have adopted an ecological understanding of writers and writing. This expanded scene of writing is afforded through the vocabulary and conceptual toolset capable of describing writing in terms of its broader horizons. In other words, an expanded, ecological view of writing and writers suggests a need for new descriptive terms. Like many aforementioned compositionists, I find this capacity in the practices and concepts of ethics but not unproblematically.

Ethics, as Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan M. Hunter remark, is a term "easily tossed off," a too familiar term, making it often unclear exactly what composition scholars mean by *ethics* (1). This gap forms the exigency to collect and contextualize representative work in composition scholarship and to surface the many variations of applications and treatments of writing ethics in practice. While I began this project with the intention of clarifying what compositionists mean by ethics, I now realize that I have raised more

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teachers advocate an egalitarian perspective, they will end up promoting particular principles, despite their denials to the contrary. If, on the other hand, pluralistic values are genuinely encouraged, teachers may discover that they have invited into their classrooms the expression of viewpoints that they find morally offensive. How is the instructor to respond when the assigned critical or reflective essay turns out to be ethnocentric, racist, sexist, or homophobic?" (327).

questions than I have answered. For example, my methodology has resisted my initial efforts to provide a single, definitive definition of writing ethics, and as a result, as I began synthesizing the scholarship I'd collected, I became less interested in asking "what is?" and more absorbed in asking "what teacher-scholars are doing with ethics?" What is it that doing ethics does for writers and their teachers?

A second fundamental assumption I borrow from Patricia Bizzell in the practice of ethical pluralism. What I borrow from ethical pluralism is a general recognition that there are many possible routes to a destination. Certainly, some routes are better than others. Writing as an ethical practice is what writers do as they determine which routes might serve them better than others given their goals, resources, and values. At a pedagogical register, terms and concepts borrowed from ethics are very helpful in describing certain aspects of writing, learning, and teaching situations. This is evident in the affinity of ethics, rhetoric, and writing and speaking pedagogy throughout the history of the Western rhetorical tradition. Ethical pluralism further benefits my classroom by drawing attention to individuality and diversity of perspectives, and ultimately, to the specificity of writing, learning, and teaching. If we follow Aristotle's lead and consider ethics the practical wisdom necessary for living a happy life, and assuming there are as many possible happy lives as there are beings to live them, then an ethical practice of writing is necessarily plural and open.

<div align="center">Ethical Perspectivalism</div>

One essay sequence that has developed out of my writing ethics research is an evolving ethical analysis assignment that grew out of a practice I call *ethical perspectivalism*. I begin the sequence by asking students to identify and describe a

contested issue. Part of this description includes an analysis of the stakeholders and their respective positions. I require students to dig beneath reductive, binary positions to describe the knot of competing ethical perspectives and claims underlying what probably initially appeared to be a straightforward, binary issue. The assignment moves from description to analysis to interpretation as students describe the competing ethical claims (ethical presumptions) operating in a conversation. Then students look for suggestions of what values or moral beliefs might underwrite each perspective. Ultimately, students strive to describe a "world view" grounded in the values and beliefs they identified, answering the question: What might be important to a person holding this world view? This is difficult for many people, since interpretation can feel a bit like making impolite assumptions about other people, so an important outcome for this sequence is for students to gain experience using interpretive strategies.

In this example, practicing ethics provides terms and concepts which afford early interventions into the beginning stages of inquiry – moments in which to pause and focus on the moral and social forces at play in the rhetorical situation. This is important because arguments rest on value systems and writing pedagogy ought to account for that. My approach, then, is to foreground ethical pluralism in the writing classroom and to ask students similarly to achieve a degree of ethical pluralism in their analyses. A tactical benefit of ethical analysis is that it allows me to situate the entire essay sequence almost entirely in the descriptive stages of inquiry. This potentially disrupts habituated writing strategies students might otherwise resort to. That is, rather than as students to argue for or against a topic, ethical analysis might only seek to describe the perspectives and various moral presumptions underwriting them.

Ethics, then, operates in my classroom as a conceptual framework and method of inquiry. When it works, ethics provides a way to open the rhetorical situation with far greater complexity. As a teacher, thinking writing and pedagogy through ethics has helped me to imagine more points of intervention in student writing processes, and more ways for me to reflect on what writers are *doing* when they write. And importantly, ethics, as practical, everyday know-how, speaks to the here-and-now, supporting writers making decisions about their writing right now, in this specific context. Writing as an ethical practice is a practice vested in *eudaimonia* – best translated as human flourishing (Polansky x). Writing, in this sense, is instrumental to one's well-being.

<center>Curator Comments: Writing as the Practice of Freedom</center>

Having been long-ago domesticated by the five-paragraph essay, I feel an obligation at the end of this project to summarize the preceding chapters and represent my argument. This habituated response is confounded by my *wunderkammer*, which I assembled not as an argument, but as a catalogue of writing scholarship with which to stage yet-unformed inquiries into writing as an ethical practice. In this manner, the *wunderkammer* helps me resist my habituated response for closure, and by remaining open, the texts might continue to suggest new questions and afford new interpretations. The catalogue of writing ethics remains open to interpretation – even my own, but that does not preclude me from offering a few final thoughts.

For me, the work covered here suggests a renewed emphasis on values in the teaching of writing – a re-valuation of values in writing pedagogy. This is, in part, a recognition that writers are doing more than simply informing or persuading with their writing; writers are doing things in the world (cf. Katz; Berlin). Taking into account the

material and social effects of writing, I suggest writing pedagogy ought to be concerned with judgment. That is, writers require more than writing instruction in order to be successful communicators – they need to exercise good judgment. Teaching writing as an ethical practice helps me to think of writing processes as being punctuated by choices. For writers to be successful as "whole" people, to borrow hooks' term, they need to make choices that contribute to their well-being and the realization of *eudaimonia* – the best possible ends.

Writing as an ethical practice is, for me, writing as a way to care for myself – not in a selfish or miserly way but in the sense of writing as the practice of freedom. We are all born to discourse and to the degree that writing is self-forming, writing as an ethical practice is a practice of caring for the self, which necessarily means caring for one another. Writing as the practice of freedom means, for me, writing in ways that increases my capacity as a writer, reader, or teacher to move or be moved, to feel and experience the world; and it means writing with an awareness of the complexity and interconnected nature of writers, writing, and the world. Writing as an ethical practice addresses writers in their material, social, and historical specificity.

Finally, I suggest this catalogue of writing scholarship, this *wunderkammer*, both in its method and contents, invites us, as hooks invites all teachers, to "collectively imagine ways to move beyond the boundaries, to transgress" our limits in search of more sustainable and more just ways of living together (207). To this end, I believe writing pedagogy ought to focus on the well-being of students and teachers. By taking care of ourselves, which necessarily means caring of one another, we increase our capacities to

learn and to grow. Perhaps, then, writing ethics in my classroom is as simple as this: Take care of yourself, and the writing will follow.

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