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Taking Writing On-Line: The Intersections Of Rhetoric, Technology, And Community In The Composition Classroom

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TAKING WRITING ON-LINE:
THE INTERSECTIONS OF RHETORIC, TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY
IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

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Master of Arts, California State University, San Bernardino

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirement

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota
August
2000

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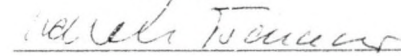
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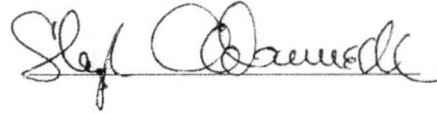
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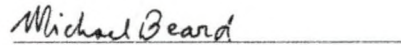
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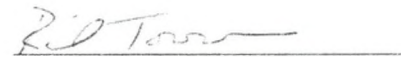


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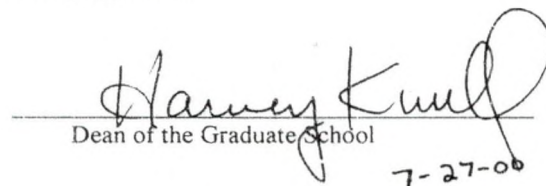






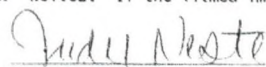


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For Robin

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ABSTRACT

Discourse constructs individuals in community and by analogy constructs students (and teachers) in the networked-writing classroom. This work of constructing subjects moves us alternately toward the group (centripetal) and away toward becoming more individual (centrifugal). In order to understand this coordinate but opposite movement within on-line communication, the dissertation brings together the two strands (within the social) of technology and rhetoric. This rhetoric of technology is defined as the invention, arrangement, and delivery of *computer-mediated* language for the purpose of evoking action upon the part of an audience. The dissertation presents—among others—the discourse theory of Patricia Bizzell, Joseph Harris's ideas concerning the usefulness of the term "community," the "political unconscious" of Fredric Jameson, Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* and dissemination, and Hawisher and Selfe's "rhetoric of technology." It argues that these ideas and those of Susan Wells, especially her "rhetoric of intersubjectivity," allow us to examine technology within community and see how it reduces multiple discourses while it creates new solidarities between individuals.

The dissertation examines the uses on-line language may be put to in networked classroom communities. It recognizes this language as highly volatile and susceptible to manipulation. It presents two case studies of networked classroom practice that profile students' and teachers' work in the new milieu of the on-line writing classroom. The first

case study examines the classroom listserv and presents an analysis of its discourse that acts to motivate both the individual and the group. This technology must, however, be let to build community within the forms of the face-to-face classroom. The second case study examines the laptop classroom where students combine resistance and creativity to manage the oppression of the technology's instrumentalism.

In a more personal vein, the author reflects on Freud's dream analysis, the cyborg, and one intransigent student that highlight his own uses of technology to discover the work of the network-writing teacher. The challenge to teaching in these on-line virtual environments is to make them more richly inhabited and not to take them for granted or let them be subsumed into the ubiquitous rhetoric of corporate e-commerce.

CHAPTER ONE

COMMUNITY

Introduction

At the last College Composition and Communication Conference in Minneapolis, I was standing in front of a table in the book exhibit of the Convention Center perusing the current books from NCTE. I happened to pick up one that was edited by the ubiquitous computers and writing team of editors Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe. I began paging through it. At that moment I looked up and there was Cynthia Selfe herself, standing beside me. I gestured to her with the book and said: "Here you are and there you are!" She hardly bothered to look at me as she moved off saying, "I'm looking to see what's out and available." I took this to mean that she was searching for her own books and collections to see their publication status. She was working.

I have to say that my comment to Selfe did not particularly invite conversation. What I said might have sounded a bit aggressive, while at the same time it was a response to the uncanny. Still, I do read her work, and, as you will see, I have integrated it into this dissertation. What did my (facile) knowledge of the person Cynthia Selfe have to do with the author Selfe? I was just a reader and student of her ideas. I was not a colleague, not an interlocutor, but a faceless conventioneer, or more simply, a person who could connect the author to her book. Yet, I feel that my inchoate desire for recognition in respect to Cynthia Selfe had to do with my own

longing to achieve integration into a scholarly community, to become part of something bigger, to have my ideas and my abilities respected by my peers.

I have for some time considered communities as places where we are equipped and encouraged to do our life's work. I don't believe we accomplish very much that is worthwhile on our own. Yet we are always conflicted about being in groups; they often move to control us and stifle our creativity. One way we have found to quell these anxieties is by way of technology, especially communication technologies. These technologies allow us to keep a distance between ourselves and others while we partake in some of the pleasures of close association—like the ease in exchange of ideas and interests. But in the end, the physical always intrudes and makes itself necessary.

In respect to the computers and writing community, my status as a graduate student and my attendance at just one computers and writing convention has not made me feel very much a part of the national community that Selfe belongs to. A possible technological remedy of conversing on a listserv with members of the same group might ease me into such a community, but does not in my experience insure membership either. The physical always seems to be the anchor for group membership; the physical is necessary for the virtual to work, or at the very least the virtual must act in tandem with the physical because the physical is where the body comes to register change and growth.

Virtual communities need the physical, which in turn changes individuals within these communities. This will be a dominant theme in this dissertation. It is not to say that I am discounting the power of technology to affect community. Technology's power comes from the ways it harnesses and speeds up communication. I will show that on-line

comes from the ways it harnesses and speeds up communication. I will show that on-line techno-communities are as able as physical communities to isolate individuals, but they also bring people into new solidarities with one another. Since the physical is absent in on-line communication, the way we use on-line discourse and its rhetoric is that much more powerful. As a result, community is an important site where these negotiations take place. The analysis of the rhetoric within electronic communities and primarily within the classroom-networked community is the major emphasis of this dissertation.

Computers and Writing in the First Year Composition Class

There are two specific communities that provide examples for my analysis of the effect of on-line communication: the community of computer and writing scholars and the first year composition class (FYC). The first is the professional community of composition scholars, particularly computers and writing scholars. The second community is the on-line FYC class made up of a teacher and twenty or so young adults—typically eighteen-year-olds with a scattering of older-than-average students. You might wonder why I presume this classroom to the status of community. That, in a nutshell, is the work of this dissertation and leads to the question: what happens to teaching and learning when the electronic writing classroom attains the status of community? The classroom is always a community in the making, and it is more material than the scholarly community. The scholarly community is comprised of computers and writing researchers, who have created a disciplinary structure for themselves and are constructed through a particular discourse but have no dedicated space to inhabit. The classroom community is tentative and short lived but integral to the practices the computers and writing scholars

enact; it gives the scholars the material space to bring pedagogical issues to bear on student writing in the networked classroom.

My dissertation is organized into four chapters and an epilogue. In this first chapter, I define terms and spell out the nature of community and its historical and rhetorical/theoretical permutations. I present community as the loom where the two parallel strands of rhetoric and technology—the warp and woof of the dissertation—will be woven together to produce cloth for a theory of networked-classroom practice. The combination of rhetoric and technology implies that I'm looking for ways that technology helps to create (invent), arrange, and deliver *machine-mediated* language for the purpose of evoking action upon the part of an audience (Johnson 21-22)—a group of individuals joined in practical association, a community. I also introduce my three themes: rhetoric, technology, and community, which I will extend and complicate in the rest of the dissertation. And finally, I examine the nature of the social and the ways language constructs individuals.

In chapter two, I examine the professional field of Computers and Writing as a community. The research field of Computers and Writing has a story to tell of institutional and disciplinary practice that gives us insight into the rhetorical nature of technology in the classroom. That story unfolds as I historicize “rhetorics of technology” from the late nineteenth century up to its uses by scholars in rhetoric, and in computers and writing.

In the third chapter, I observe students and their teachers who have built classrooms in the virtual spaces of the computer network. I interrogate my own

experiences using a computer-networked classroom listserv, and I discuss a visit to a nearby campus where every student has a laptop computer.

In chapter four, I recall my own memories of school, learning, and my own past and more recent experience with technology to discover what I might have learned in order to teach composition students at this moment in my professional career.

These four chapters combine theory, history, practice, and personal experience in my effort to formulate the theoretical underpinnings of what we are talking about when we conceive of the networked classroom. Much of my own experience with teaching in computer-mediated classrooms lies in the future. My primary objective, therefore, is to use this dissertation as a way to create knowledge for writing teachers interested in technology—myself and my readers—who are bound for that further shore.

Keywords In Composition Studies

This introductory chapter presents an overview of the nature and use of the word “community” in its function as an interpretive category for what individuals do together. Since I am a writing teacher, I’m most anxious to relate this more general discussion of community to my classroom. The type of writing classroom I am interested in uses various forms of technology to enable instruction. One reason for this study comes from the contemporary concern to describe on-line communities (Gurak 1997; Doheny-Farina 1996; Mitchell 1995). I have read these descriptions of on-line communities and applied their insights to the on-line writing classroom. I also apply terms from composition studies in order to flesh out the mechanism of the social

within the classroom. For that I turn to a discussion of the history of composition terms that specifically deal with individual and group interaction within classrooms.

Three interlocking terms are important in composition studies for describing what goes on in the writing classroom community: academic discourse, discourse community, and social constructionism. Whatever we decide is academic discourse in the writing classroom occurs in a discourse community that consequently constructs us (students and teacher) socially through language, context, and method. Each of these three concepts has a history in Composition Studies that I will briefly detail below. A review of the uses of these terms highlights the burgeoning interest the academy has had with theory and theoretical approaches to teaching. The use of these terms also reflects composition's attention to student diversity and the multiple discourses this diversity foregrounds. The electronic-writing classroom extends and complicates these diverse discourses and makes their articulation an issue of community.

Academic Discourse, Discourse Community, Social Construction

When I think of the term "community" as it relates to composition, I see it as synonymous with the *mise-en-scène*, or "stage setting," of the first year writing course. The most prominent item in this staging is the type of writing the teacher has in mind for the students to do. Some have conceived the focus of the FYC to be the students' authentic voice (Elbow 1994; Fulwiler 1990), while others, who I loosely label social constructionists, teach what they describe as academic discourse. I will be discussing the latter group's influence since they, more than the others, focus on group behavior. The social constructionists have especially relied on notions of academic discourse.

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The term "academic discourse" was first used in Composition by Mina Shaughnessy in the 1970s to distinguish between the kind of written expression used by underprepared students and the kind of written expression desired by the university. Patricia Bizzell, an early theorist of academic discourse, was influenced by Shaughnessy and wrote in her early essays (1978; 1979) that academic discourse helped students participate in a common practice of rational criticism that they could then share with the larger academic community. Critics of academic discourse such as Peter Elbow (1991) countered that the emphasis on specialized language gave the impression that it promoted elitism. By the early 1990s, the term academic discourse reflected the changing notion (Bizzell 1992) that there were no stable communities to whom students could direct an academic discourse, and that the college classroom needed to project an amalgam of academic styles within possible communities. Discussions of such discourse communities were often the result of talk about academic discourse.

The term "discourse community" came into composition by way of sociolinguistics and their use of the term, "speech community." Both terms reflect the power of language to define social groups. Compositionists make the distinction that people are born into a speech community, while a discourse community admits members "by persuasion, training or relevant qualifications" (Swales 24). The concept of discourse community "is useful in the theory and analysis of writing because it embraces the rhetorical concern with social interchange (discourse) and with situation or context (community)" (Killingsworth 110). But discourse community felt too much like a strait jacket that might enforce group think.

Scholars started to use "community" to do duty for the combined term. By the late 1980s, "community" was used by some compositionists to indicate every group or constituency imaginable, and it soon lost its effectiveness as an explanatory term. In his influential essay, "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing" (1989), Joseph Harris refers to the uncritical use of the term "community":

For like the pronoun *we*, *community* can be used in such a way that it invokes what it seems merely to describe. The writer says to his reader: "We are part of a certain community; they are not"—and, if the reader accepts, the statement is true. And, usually, the gambit of community, once offered, is almost impossible to decline—since what is invoked is a community of those in power, of those who know the accepted ways of writing and interpreting texts. (13)

There is a heavy inevitability to Harris's conception of community. It is as though we cannot escape its grip no matter what. Yet there is another more ineffable feel to modern communities for Harris. The rhetorical power of community, above, does not seem to be real at all when he argues that "the 'communities' to which our theories refer all exist at one remove from actual experience. . . . they are all literally utopias—nowheres, meta-communities—that are tied to no particular time or place" (14). Thus, the power of calling us into community is thwarted by a lack of imagination and specificity. We are not as skilled at the rhetoric of community as we think we are.

Harris may have been responding to the same thing those opposed to the term "academic discourse" disliked in that term—its exclusivity. In fact, the "nowhere" aspect of community he objects to paradoxically makes the term into a static target that, according to Vandenberg and Morrow, "tacitly supports the preservation of institutional authority by privileging discursive authority, a gesture that renders a community an oligarchy, an exclusive rather than inclusive construct" (22).

The consequences for writing teachers who used "community" (or "discourse community") was that they could, according to Bizzell, effectively fend off criticism from above and below: "To those below, it seems to promise that we're not excluding anyone. To those above, it seems to ensure that we're not admitting anyone truly disruptive of the status quo, either" (1991, 59). It is likely that most of us teach somewhere between these two positions, balancing our obligations to the institution with our own attempts to stay sane when we are confronted with the truly difficult student. I believe that the term discourse community forms the glove for the hand of academic discourse. And what would this gloved hand or hands do when confronted with the writing students? Social construction theory has given many of us ways to think about this task.

Early twentieth-century uses of the term "social construction" came from those who championed "social approaches" to writing instruction as they were linked to the hard times of the 1930s and progressive democratic education (Haynes 221). This emphasis of the political leads to rhetorical views of language—the social use of language (in community) that constructs individuals. In other words, our motives for utilizing language (writing) are to fix ourselves in the social; and, the social gives us our identity through the texts it

authorizes. Prominent postmodern theorists who influenced composition's notion of social construction are Kuhn (1970), Rorty (1979), and Geertz (1983), among others.

The early activist version of social constructionism was linked to the new postmodern theories of the social by compositionist Kenneth Bruffee. Bruffee is best known for his theories of collaborative learning, which his ideas of social construction help to articulate. In Bruffee's articulation of social construction, knowledge produced in the classroom was socially constructed and could not be imposed by traditional authorities (the teacher). This knowledge leads naturally to consensus and group cooperation. Critics of Bruffee (Trimbur 1989; Foster 1987; Myer 1986) countered that his brand of social constructionism robbed the individual of autonomy and made the classroom hostage to group-think. Others (Vitanza 1987; Faigley 1992) saw that the term contained a contradiction: what does the constructing is itself constructed. Therefore, social constructionism should be understood "as both a philosophy and a practice/method of displacing previous epistemologies and models of learning that privilege individuals, authors, the teacher, and in some instances, the social itself" (Haynes 223). What remains is what social construction started with—the political, and ultimately, the rhetorical.

All three terms I've been discussing—academic discourse, discourse communities, and social construction—bear down on the teacher and the student with the force that wants to (updating Quintilian's "a good man writing well") see good people speaking and writing well together—good in the respect that they recognize one another's differences and resolve to locate the words (texts) to achieve what can be considered "writing well." Classrooms should be looked upon as learning communities to do this work—something

of which networked writing classrooms might or might not be capable. My ultimate purpose in this dissertation is to theorize on-line learning communities. But first I want to construct a model of a traditional classroom to examine the ways it changes when technology is added. Who are the people that make up the typical writing classroom and what kinds of communities might these individuals create?

The Writing Classroom Community

Any (possible) construction of the writing classroom-as-community contains two very different subjects: the teacher and the students. These entities are distinguished significantly by their relation to the power structures in the classroom. And each is identified by often conflicting roles.

Composition teachers have been variously described as supportive and nurturing allies to their students and/or "hawk-eyed critical-minded bouncers at the bar of civilization" (Elbow 1983, 339). They are seen as "reader[s] and teacher[s] of reading (writ large), as interpreter[s] and critic[s] of texts (in an expansive sense" (Heilker 233). They may also be looked upon as "proselytizer[s] for (and suppliers of) epistemological or ideological" points of view (234). If they happen to have achieved professional status by garnering an academic terminal degree, then they may be looked upon as teachers/researchers/theorists. Most composition teachers, however, fall into the graduate-student, part-time, or adjunct-teacher category and are usually exploited in various ways by their institutions.

The conceptualization of the student in the writing class is similarly problematic. Composition historian, Paul Heilker, gives this list of possible positions writing students might fill:

[N]ascent rhetor/citizens, apprentices who learn the trade by imitating the work processes of their masters, novitiates undergoing rites of passage to enter a hall-fied and cloistered community, angry and alienated persons susceptible to conservative propaganda, disempowered and helpless people unaware that they are being sucked into white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied capitalistic, corporate drone-ism, and as heroes who struggle valourously to resist this same co-optation. (226)

When we combine these conceptions—grouping teacher and students together—as the term classroom community implies, we come face-to-face with Harris’s view of “community as something “that invokes what it seems merely to describe” (13). Then we recognize the ambivalence involved in considering students as possible rhetors/citizens, novitiates, helpless drones, and heroes who are thrown together for 15 weeks with a teacher who acts in various ways at various times as nurturing mother, authoritarian father, ideologue, theorist, and exploited worker. What is invoked is a teeming and diverse place, hardly the setting of a stable, unifying force. These classroom subjectivities loosely describe what makes up the actors and some possible roles they might play in the writing classroom community. I’m not being exhaustive here but want to show the heterogeneous aspect of the writing classroom. I also want to imagine the “discursive violence” (Wells 1996, 39) that is done to both parties, student and teacher, when any univocal discourse assignment is proposed for such a classroom. We’ve seen in the reactions to the three terms I discussed above some idea of what the social enables and what it enforces. Such enabling and enforcing are heightened in the networked class,

especially when the technology is given free rein. Yet even in the technology-rich classroom there is evidence of "the low excluded carnival of writing" (Susan Miller 35). This is the atmosphere where notions of the modern composition classroom and my own description of the denizens of such classrooms coexist. The many different subjectivities collected in the composition classroom have a chance to proliferate on-line. The risk of chaos is manifest, as is the chance that univocalism will be reinscribed. Students are the first ones to recognize the freeing space technology gives them, but it is up to the teacher to come up with forms of practice to mediate this freedom. Teachers recognize the challenges and the opportunities of teaching writing on-line when they learn the intricacies of the networked classroom.

The Nature of the Networked Classroom

A networked classroom contains computers that students use in order to write their drafts, e-mail, conference, play games, and surf the Internet. My own experience with networked writing classrooms comes exclusively from the University of North Dakota where there are no dedicated networked computer labs in the English Department. I have carried on networked discussions with my students in the various computer labs on campus that are open to all students. I reserve time in these labs and ask students to come to the lab instead of the normal classroom. The other way I have used computers is to have classroom listserv discussions. I present a case history of one such session in chapter three.

I use "networked classroom" in this dissertation as a generic term for classroom activities which include but are not limited to stand-alone tasks such as word processing or

spread-sheet manipulation. Most important in networked classrooms is that students are involved in electronic communication with other class members at a distance. It may be happening in the same room, but it does not have to be. This type of communication is not fixed by either time or place; it occurs in the "nowhere" of cyberspace. Cyberspace is a dematerialized frame, which accommodates asynchronous communications as well as very fast synchronous "speech," as we will see in the first classroom case study in chapter three. The computer-mediated classroom contrasts to the traditional, face-to-face classroom, where students and teacher are contemporaneous to the speech acts they produce.

For all its virtualness, student work on the network still imagines an audience and therefore has a rhetoric. In contrast to face-to-face interaction within the physical, "bricks and mortar" confines of a classroom, students and teachers do not see their interlocutors in the networked classroom. In the face-to-face classroom, writers and speakers can see who is reading and listening to them. They are able to respond to physical cues given by listeners or readers. There are no physical cues on-line. Tone of voice must be inferred or given in some graphic or pictorial way (emoticons). There is also the problem of figuring out where communication is occurring. When we think of "places" on-line, we think of webs and networks.

The network is the linkage of computers (servers) that contain sophisticated hardware and software that allow the transfer of messages and images from computer to computer. With writing technologies (word processing, e-mail, listservs, etc.) students and teachers can establish outposts in the network to communicate with one another.

These outposts have been described as cyber-communities and conform to Harris's description of "nowheres," but are not as inconsequential as his term intends. They not only reinscribe the old inequalities of race, class, and gender, but they distribute and multiply discourses with blinding frequency. I will show that on-line classrooms control language and the individuals that speak this language, yet they also allow for expanded use of the diverse discourses students bring to the classroom. I intend my study to be about the nowhere of networked classrooms, classrooms that construct the social in more and more challenging ways.

The work we do in the composition classroom involves the interested ways we use the knowledge *of* the social and the knowledge *by* the social within various scholarly communities. The nature of these communities and their influence on the community of the classroom is the work of this dissertation. I begin in the next section to define the term "community," to situate it in its social-theoretical context, and to examine the ways this context extends to networked classrooms.

The Roots of Community

In his *Keywords*, Raymond Williams defines the modern uses of the word "community" this way: It is "the quality of holding something in common, as in community interests, community goods" and "a sense of common identity and characteristics" (75). He acknowledges certain "complexities" related to the word. They extend "to the difficult interaction between the tendencies originally distinguished in the historical development: on the one hand the sense of direct common concern, on the other hand the materialization of various forms of common organization, which may or may not

adequately express this" (76). In other words, a group of individuals is mobilized to form a community by common concerns, but their association as a body may or may not allow these common concerns to reach fruition.

Such a pattern of promising association defeated by organization is evident in meanings of the word "community" from the latter part of the nineteenth century when "community" first became a term in the social sciences. In what follows, I extend a discussion of the complexities of the term "community" in order to tell the story of the classroom as community.

I will map the modern definition of the term community as well as give the theoretical and rhetorical implications of the term for those in English Studies and Composition. Finally, I observe the way these notions of community fit into the description of a networked classroom.

Sociology and Community

The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* gives two primary definitions of community:

- 1) As a quality or state as in the quality of appertaining to or being held by all in common; joint or common ownership, tenure, liability, etc.: as in *community of goods*. (1823: Lamb: I have a community of feeling about [Shakespeare's] plays), and 2) A body of individuals. The body of those having common or equal rights or rank, as distinguished from the privileged classes; the body of commons; the commonality. A body of people organized into a political, municipal, or social unity. A body of men

living in the same locality. *The community*: the people of a country (or district) as a whole; the general body to which all alike belong, the public. (1789 Bentham: The good of the community cannot require that any act should be made an offense which is not liable in some way or other to be detrimental to the community) (298).

Both these definitions—the quality of something held in common and a body of individuals organized for a purpose—and their permutations are important for the way the term “community” is used in relation to the writing classroom. In order to get to a position from which I can describe the classroom community, I want to first see the way community has been variously defined in Sociology and rhetoric.

During the second half of the 19th century the term “community” named, among other things, the anxiety those in small towns felt about the city. It named the fear that individuals would be unable to continue the fraternal associations they imagined country folk possessed. Community was the term used to express a lost world, and it gained its importance as a commonplace as the feelings of urban alienation became more intense. In the new sociology of the time, the first disciplinary notice was taken of the problem of community. It was described by way of Tönnies’s binary term: *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft*.

The term originates in Tönnies (1887), and is roughly translated as *community-society*. In his book *Community and Social Change in America* (1978), Thomas Bender states that *Gemeinschaft* “corresponds to the historical and popular notion of community: family, kinship groups, friendship networks and neighborhoods . . . characterized by

(17) Bender identifies *Gesellschaft* or "contractual association . . . within the city, . . . an 'artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings,' characterized by competition and impersonality" (17). These two sets of characteristics are not mutually exclusive, but they do announce a gap between a utopian past and a dreary future that the longing for commonality tries to fill.

Bender notices the fissure between Tönnies's two terms: "in *Gemeinschaft*, people 'remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in *Gesellschaft* they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors'" (17-18). People tended to identify rapid urbanization with the latter, while romanticizing the former. According to Bender, Tönnies tends to be ambivalent about which term he thinks dominates in society. Bender takes Tönnies's ambivalence to mean that the term should not be split apart. He makes the point that actual historical contexts exist where *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* operate (not only then but now) "in two ways."

Simply placing Tönnies and his development of the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* typology into proper historical context begins to reveal the real meaning of his concept and its usefulness for the study of community. Tönnies wrote at a time when the small towns of Germany and the people from them who valued small-town patterns of community were being integrated into larger structures of society that had emerged with the growth of cities, industrial capitalism, and the centralized national state. Tönnies formulated his *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* distinction at a time when men and women were intensely conscious of being involved in two

kinds of human interaction. His terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* were not places; they were forms of human interaction.

These two kinds of interaction constituted the social alternatives available in modern society. Moreover, he anticipated that both of these forms of interaction were likely to be permanent aspects of all social life. Whereas he indicated that *Gesellschaft* was gaining significance in people's lives, he did not say that all relationships were or would become what he called *Gesellschaft*. "The force of *Gemeinschaft* persists," he wrote, "even within the period of *Gesellschaft*." Tönnies, in other words, used his dichotomy in two ways: to denote the character of a whole society in a particular historical period and to describe two patterns of human relationship within that society. (33-34)

The interplay and unity of *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* as "forms of human interaction was not recognized," says Bender, by sociologists, who after Tönnies made *Gesellschaft* (society) the more visible concept. Thus a modern sociology of urbanization began to be produced (paralleling the rise of the university, science, technology, etc.) that favored an Enlightenment era, deterministic, and rational view that valued consistent progress from one form to the other. Within this sociology a discourse that valued individualism and uninterrupted technical progress became recognizable as the only language of community. Such an aggregate cannot be a very responsive kind of community since its members are mostly monads congregating together for self-centered purposes. Such groupings are discourse communities that

contain narrower forms of human interaction, not the full sense of interaction that occurs across differences. I examine communities of monad when I look at Laura Gurak's on-line protest communities in the next chapter.

For the most part, scholars have ignored a call to examine the "interaction and interplay of communal and noncommunal ways in the lives of all" (Bender 43). They have concentrated on the hard-nosed individualism implied in the *Gesellschaft* (society) side of the original binary. In fact, there has been a backlash against those who think the communal is still possible, especially after the horrors of the 20th century. They argue that communitarianism (like Bender's) smacks of the thoroughly impractical, even the outdated and the dangerous (Lasch). Communitarianism promotes sentiments verging on utopian nostalgia. This rejection of the communal and the valuing of the individual, according to Stephen Holmes, "assumes that when a person transcends self-interest, he is necessarily behaving in a morally admirable way" (qtd. in Lasch 173). These critics can't see how traditional notions of community can harbor, according to Bender, a "vigorous and effective political life." They ignore Bender's call to simultaneously hold "tradition and modernity" (167) together as constitutive ideologies that might allow individuals to struggle productively within group settings.

The quarrel between those who value the individual's autonomy and single vision and those who value the group's cohesiveness and conviviality is constantly staged in the classroom. These competing qualities are played out in the discourse of the classroom community, as Kenneth Bruffee's notions of collaborative learning attest. Individuals are

constructed twice in community, first, when they bring their discourse to the group, and second, when they are influenced by the discourses of the group. This doubling of discourse constantly inter-plays between the individual and the communal, the institution and the teacher and the students.

For better or worse, the writing teacher's use of the term "community" preserves the influence of institutional discourse—not necessarily academic discourse—while downplaying students' home-community discourse. The students' language, with all the nuances of personality, ethnicity, popular culture, etc. becomes subsumed into the institutional, corporatization of education. Yet most teachers see students' home discourse continuing inchoate and rich possibilities. I want to take notice of this inchoate student discourse, and help transform its rhetoric.

The rhetorician M. Jimmie Killingsworth (1992) believes in accepting and using the doubleness inherent in community discourse. It is all part of the rhetorician's job—to "keep alive competing concepts of discourse community." He purposes a local and a global rationale for community. As a rhetorician, he is concerned with various sites of language use, so he explains that a local community such as the classroom is a place where

the [student] writer is associated, the site of the occupational practice by which he or she is identified in demographic descriptions. Global communities also help to determine the writer's identity, but they are not restricted by physical site. Rather, they are defined by like mindedness, political and intellectual

affiliation, and other such “special interests” and are maintained by widely dispersed discourse practices made possible by modern publishing and other communication technologies. (111)

Killingsworth relates the problem of the local and global communities by identifying the local community with “metonymy (the trope of contingency and close association)” and the global community with “metaphor (the trope of identity-in-difference)” (112). These tropes work in a similar fashion to Bender’s “two patterns of human relationships”—the communal and the noncommunal. In the networked classroom, students participate in the local/communal when they interact in the face-to-face class, while when they employ the technology to communicate with their teacher, each other, and others more widespread when they are part of the global/noncommunal.

The work of theorizing the dual pattern of communities—the force that moves us toward the group (centripetal) or toward the individual (centrifugal)—what Carolyn Miller (1993) calls the problem of the “one and the many,” begins in the next section. The theories I propose are necessarily theories of language because, as we know from social construction theory, language constructs subjects. In the classroom there is a doubling of this effect: teacher- and student-talk construct a discourse community, but the classroom as a community then operates by promoting teaching and learning methods to construct itself. Therefore, we need to construct both a theory of the classroom community and a rhetoric for putting into place these theories by students.

Theory

The quarrel between philosophy and rhetoric survives every sea change in the history of Western thought, continually presenting us with the (skewed) choice between the plain unvarnished truth straightforwardly presented and the powerful but insidious appeal of "fine language," that has transgressed the limits of representation and substituted its own forms for the forms of reality. —Stanley Fish ("Rhetoric" 206)

On the surface, Fish's "insidious appeal of 'fine language'" is not what the students-as-consumers might think they want or deserve for their parents', and increasingly, their own hard earned tuition dollar. But if we can show FYC students that rhetoric can be both a transparent tool for communication and an engine of persuasion, then we might have a chance to change their writing and their thinking. This rhetoric has the greatest chance to affect students if it is presented in a community that recognizes their power to use it and the ethical choices implicit in its use. Killingsworth's "local and global" within community gives us one way to look at the on-line classroom community that takes into consideration both the material and the virtual aspects of the new electronic classroom. Another way to examine what goes on in the on-line classroom is to analyze the way texts are produced, texts that, whatever their "propositional content," are situated in "discursive relations, the complex relations among writers and readers which support and constrain [their] textuality" (Wells 1996, 2). These discursive relations are at the heart of on-line writing and teaching.

Teaching writing is a difficult enterprise under most circumstances, but since we've been told that there are no strict definitions of academic discourse or clear disciplinary boundaries, the difficulties seem to have multiplied. This is the news of the postmodern. Yet, we could learn to ignore the way students (mis)manage the process of learning academic discourse, or we could begin to recognize that they continue to practice discourses representative of other social contexts they inhabit, or that their other discourses (and communities) compete against any univocalism—academic or otherwise. The academic discourse community is never univocal, nor can it ever be. I would argue that this student “heteroglossia” (Bakhtin) is a positive outcome that needs to be continually theorized.

Theory and Its Discontents: Eagleton, Hirsch, and Knapp and Michaels

What kind of theory can we have about the type of discourse that occurs in the classroom community? First, I use Eagleton and Derrida to show what theory does, then I consider the possibilities of theory for predicting the probable outcome of teaching writing in the on-line classroom. In this section, I discuss the anti-theory argument by exploring Knapp and Michaels's essay, “Against Theory” and Peggy Kamuf's response to their ideas. Compositionist Patricia Bizzell reminds us that when we do this work of theory we recall the always already nature of ideology. That is: what we do is ideological no matter what. Even doing nothing is ideological. And finally, I examine Jamesonian critical practice to experience the hope he gives for balancing the contradictions of theory. This foray into Theory (big “T”) will allow me to theorize (little “t”) about the community in the classroom.

According to Terry Eagleton "[a]ll theory and knowledge . . . is 'interested,' in the sense that you can always ask why one should bother to develop it in the first place" (1983). Stanley Fish (1980) doesn't care to ask why theory exists at all because he says we should care only about it in as far as it *is* practice. Therefore, one discourse community (the home of practice) operates (what we say or write about ourselves—that's who we are) the same as the next. What one does in them is necessarily corrupted by ideologies one can't shake. Fish's "interest" is self-interest, a technician's interest in what he can do with those who agree to the same language. His discourse community (qua machine) doesn't have a truth-telling role, which would imply a hierarchy, but makes its way in the world as action and as rhetoric. Eagleton claims that his Marxism is a rhetoric that contains a moral practice, while Fish's rhetoric has no particular ethical value except the one agreed upon at a particular time, in a particular discourse community. Both Fish and Eagleton's rhetorics contrast at one extreme with the "scientific" theoretical approach of structuralism, which was "[un]concerned with the real objects which people spoke about: in order to study language effectively, the referents of the signs, the things they actually denoted, had to be placed in brackets" (Eagleton 97); and, at the other extreme with liberal humanism, which can only say in the most abstract terms that literature or art or culture done a certain way "make you a better person" (Eagleton 203). E. D. Hirsch, on the other hand, is an example of a critic who relies on the power of the canon to form a hermeneutic ground for interpretation. He also provides a convenient place to start a discussion of the efficacy of theory since he sees its source in author intention, a particular notion that "floats" for poststructuralist.

In his work, Hirsch—the conservative we love to hate—wishes to accomplish the “objective” task of interpretation. For him, there is no such thing as students and teacher constructing a discourse community. High culture has provided a fine structure to indoctrinate (teach) the young (no harm in that, we’ve all been through it and look at us, he says, we haven’t done so badly), which is contained in the books of the Canon. Classrooms are mere halfway houses where knowledge is made available by skilled academic practitioners who relentlessly pursue author intention in those texts they deem canonical.

In their essay “Against Theory,” Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, who are even stricter intentionalists than Hirsch, conclude that it is hard to imagine—maybe impossible—language without intention. Author intention is inseparable from the writer and the work, so there is no theorizing to be done. In other words, author intention exists or it doesn’t. Knapp and Michaels’s claim that intentionless words cannot be called words at all; all language intends some meaning but this intention cannot be separated from what the language does.

The theoretical impulse, as we have described it, always involves the attempt to separate things that should not be separate: on the ontological side, meaning from intention, language from speech acts; on the epistemological side, knowledge from true belief. Our point has been that the separated terms [theory and practice] are in fact inseparable. . . . [T]heory is nothing else but the attempt to escape practice. (1436)

Their position has been called "New Pragmatism"—shock treatment for the theory-mad critics of the postmodern. It's a leap into the Nietzschean abyss that doesn't quite make it to the bottom. It's a cry of despair that results when one rejects theory because it is discovered to be the (rhetorical) device that allows us not to contradict ourselves. "Against Theory's" language makes too much of a dead end that reveals itself to be thoroughly rhetorical, which *is* itself a theory they refuse to acknowledge.

Theory is a way we have to get ourselves out of contradiction. If it is Knapp and Michaels's purpose to take this tool away from us, then they have done us a disservice. I am especially interested in this controversy when it comes to its influence on the networked classroom.

Peggy Kamuf's review article (1986) of the W. J. T. Mitchell's collection *Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmaticism* gives another point of view on Knapp and Michaels that I find useful in connecting author intention to on-line writing practice. Kamuf examines Knapp and Michaels's example ("fable"—Kamuf) that they say proves author intentionality and consequently the stability of meaning. This example involves stanzas of a Wordsworth poem that are mysteriously transcribed into the sand on an oceanfront beach. In the scenario Knapp and Michaels present, the perpetrators of this ruse seem to be some "half a dozen figures in white lab coats" who clamor out of a surfaced submarine just off shore. Knapp and Michaels's claim that *this* is "evidence of an author." Kamuf is skeptical that the submarine and its crew are "evidence of the author of the lyric poem which begins "A slumber did my spirit seal." Is it, she says, instead,

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“evidence (within a fiction) of a mechanical or technical process for inscribing marks on a distant surface” (6)—in other words, they’re quoting. And this process of technical inscription has no author (although it might be produced by “a conscious agent” [4]), or at least the author is not present, for Wordsworth is nowhere in sight. The marks on the beach were for Knapp and Michaels empirical evidence of author intention. Kamuf sees it differently:

Now, what happens when we conjugate the premise of Knapp and Michaels’s intentionalism which the fable is intended to support—“all meaning is always the author’s meaning”—with the slip [mistaking “conscious agents” for authors] that designates the excited experimenter as the author? Is this figure’s particular, finite intention which is the “meaning” of the poem that can now be read on the beach? Clearly not, since “you” the beachwalker and you, Knapp and Michaels’s reader are to understand that what you have just witnessed is a successful experiment in a method of *telecommunication* using previously untried media and for that purpose any kind of iterable mark could have served as well. (emphasis added, 7)

It seems absurd then that Knapp and Michaels attribute the writing technology aboard the “submarine” as implicated in the author function. If nothing else, the “white lab coated” men are merely scribes employing the writing technology to successfully inscribed the marks in the sand. Wordsworth is the only author of the stanzas, and he is absent. The mistake Knapp and Michaels make according to Kamuf is related to the “structure of

citationality" (7). As the Knapp and Michaels case illustrates, iterability allows one to lift a set of written signs from one instance to another. Sharon Crowley explains it this way:

[I]terability, or repeatability, of the written sign is what permits it to be cited, grafted into other chains of signs, and harnessed to other uses than the original author may have intended or foreseen. . . . This raises doubt about the status of writing as a vehicle of "communication," if this metaphor is to be understood by its association with media that are thought to transmit or "hand over" information, as in "telecommunication." (16)

In the case of the submarine "experimenters" within Knapp and Michaels's fable, Wordsworth's words were used to demonstrate the telecommunication equipment, thus demonstrating in its way that "the same words [Wordsworth's poetry in this case] can be repeated with all sorts of different intentions or meanings" (8). Knapp and Michaels's purpose in presenting their fable had to do with shutting down theory but throughout their essay they insist on "the inescapability of reading fictions" (13), and this need to participate in citationality makes them theorists in spite of themselves. Kamuf ends her review with this indictment: "That 'Against Theory' cannot practice what it preaches is the sort of dilemma theory teaches us to look out for. It becomes a moral dilemma only when that inability is declared to be of no theoretical interest" (13). The inability to use theory hamstring us from recognizing our own failures in logic and our petty and not so petty reliance on established truths and methods.

I see that much of Knapp and Michaels's problem originates in their reliance on a rhetoric of technology behind their fable/argument and in the technology within their

fiction. This rhetoric of technology, as I will show in the next chapter, allows the machine to assume the status of agent. The submarine's telecommunications technology undoubtedly gave the experimenters the false idea that they were the authors of the marks on the beach. That could be the only reason why these "white lab coated" figures are so prominent in Knapp and Michaels's fiction. The success of the technology completely obscures the history and rhetoric of the poetry. Meaning is concentrated in the hands of the experimenters and, at least for Knapp and Michaels, that is the only meaning in the horizon of the fable. But we (with Kamuf's help) are able to read the fable differently and see the way it (mis)uses the Wordsworth text. I take a techno-moral from this story: technology can become a powerful distraction that has the ability to shut down theorizing just when we need it the most. Technology is so powerful looking that it often fills the entire horizon and seduces us into believing that it is in control of meaning. This problem is found in the technology-rich writing classroom, too. Teacher-talk, the mediating force in the classroom, has a hard time being "heard" above the bright, shiny new machines that are dedicated to teaching writing. Teachers don't even get the chance to balance the frailty of their talk with a theoretical method that checks their power when technology comes between them and their students. It is indeed a moral dilemma if teachers are unable to see beyond the wild experiment of writing with technology to the young writers striving to learn ways through the contradictions schooling throws up to them. The moral dilemma is especially rife when we consider the consequences of theory when it helps to create ideology.

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Ideology and *Différance*

As we've seen from the history of the use of the term "academic discourse," it has often functioned as a naturalized category in composition studies. It has functioned as a technology that inculcates students with certain values and experiences that energize many of the roles students assume in the composition classroom (i.e., apprentices, drones, heroes, etc.). Lately, however, it has become a site for teacher and student heteroglossia. Yet, determining what teachers want writing to do is still a problem filled with conflict, especially if we want to pursue the consequences—the beauty and joy of effective practice.

Such practice—no matter if it involves a strict reading of academic discourse or if it participates in classroom heteroglossia—is suffused with ideology: "a rich 'system of representations,' worked up in specific material practices, which helps form individuals into social subjects who 'freely' internalize an appropriate 'picture' of their social world and their place in it" (Kavanagh 310). Students need to be awakened to the rich system of forces bound up in the ideologies around them and in their rhetorical uses and abuses. There is no better place to do this than the classroom where the possibility of community is always tenuous and conflicted and where there are the possibilities for important discussions of ideology. But it is not always clear how ideology is operating in classrooms. A brief foray into Derridian deconstruction will demonstrate the workings of a rhetorically infused study of the effects of ideology in the classroom.

Every time we think we've escaped ideology, it feels that much more present. Post-structuralism gives us an (inhabitable) absence as a way to think about this paradox.

This absence is central to Jacques Derrida's term *différance*. Sharon Crowley defines *différance* this way: "This word is a pun in French, combining the meanings of 'differing' (as any set of items lined up in space differ from one another) and 'deferring' (as in putting off, delaying)" (9). Derrida takes this notion from Saussure who claimed all meaning was constructed through difference.

Différance forces ideologies open one moment and shut the next. This difference switch operates constantly in the writing classroom; it helps constitute the classroom as a particularly teeming, overflowing, borderless, and discontinuous place that differs in regard to the language students use. Yet it is by this language students resist one minute and acquiesce the next to the academic discourse community, while all along (with the teacher) they construct versions of that community. *Différance* can be described as the linguistic wall teachers are forced up against when trying to figure out community-based teaching. Teachers must deal with the diversity of discourses inherent in the classroom while enforcing rules and forms that do violence to school subjects. The on-line classroom fares no better in this regard since technology speeds up the many discourses that squeeze expression into narrower and narrower avenues of distribution (i.e., the protocols of e-mail, on-line conferencing, and chat rooms). The beauty of *différance* is that it forces constant re/elaboration of discourse practices. It is linked to Derrida's notion of dissemination.

Bearn's (1995) discussion of dissemination figures prominently in his reading of Derrida's *Sec* ["Signature, Event, Context"]. "There is no end to the significances that will have been invoked by each use of a word; nothing we do can invoke anything short of

all the serious and nonserious significances of the words we employ" (14). Dissemination acts uncontrolled under the calm surface certainty of speech act theory. Derrida says communication does not do only what speakers/writers want it to do; it doesn't transfer particular meaning from one person to another, it "disseminates." In other words, the actions that end up being produced by a performative are not necessarily the actions one could hope for from whatever was written (or said). He's not saying speech acts don't exist—they "exist," but we can't predict the kind of speech act produced by any particular language act. But we can direct these assertions rhetorically, which allows for certain work to be done. The nature of that work depends upon the ideology that becomes apparent in the practice of the rhetoric.

We've come by way of rhetoric's "appeal of 'fine' language" to Derrida's *différance* machine. In between there have been those who wished to get rid of theory and those who see the importance of its history, its politics, and its rhetoric. If the social is constructing us in the classroom then what it has done may not last the next bit of theorizing if we do not persist in our critique of its power. That is, unless we erect an ethical practice, we will continue to be slaves to the wash of (someone else's) theory, or to its institutionalization in semi-permanent ideology. There must be flux and stasis, a rhetoric and a politics. I turn next to the politics.

Politics, Literary Criticism, and Composition Studies

The kind of pedagogy that would foster responsible inspection of the politically loaded hidden curriculum in composition class is discourse analysis. . . . To point out that discourse conventions exist would be to politicize the classroom—or rather, to make everyone aware that it is already politicized (Bizzell 1982, 99).

In the above quotation, Patricia Bizzell says she wants to merge linguistics, literary criticism, and composition studies to reach a new synthesis about what goes on in classroom discourse communities. "I hope that this rhetorical synthesis, because it turns our attention to questions of value and persuasion, will also reawaken us to the collective nature of the whole educational endeavor" (101). Bizzell unequivocally states that composition studies can shoulder its disciplinary weight alongside linguistics and literary criticism. We are far away from the concerns of remediation with which she begins this essay. Could it be that the work of theorizing underprepared students doesn't have the sex appeal of postmodern theory? Nevertheless, it is news that postmodern theories of language have invaded the theoretical discourse applied to the writing classroom. Might they make their way through the actual doors of the classroom? Patricia Bizzell seems to hope so, and so do I.

Bizzell believes, as an anti-foundationalist (a synonym for the postmodern), that there cannot be a "theory of language that claims to transcend social contexts" ("Foundationalism" 1986, 202). However, the notion of anti-foundationalism contains a logical contradiction: a term with the prefix "anti-" immediately posits a contrasting point of view that then must be defended as "true." Calling yourself an anti-foundationalist makes a statement of truth which then makes this statement foundational. It sets up what Bizzell, by way of Stanley Fish, refers to as "'anti-foundationalist theory hope': the hope of the anti-foundationalist that her theory can function effectively as if it were absolute grounds for belief" (1992, 26). This would seem as much of a dead-end as the one Knapp and Michaels led us to in their essay. It drives Bizzell to wonder "how to argue in an anti-foundationalist universe of discourse for left-oriented or egalitarian social values The

critical method does not confer the authority to make this argument. The argument can only be made ideologically, with interests acknowledged" (27). Fish might help us with this problem, when he says in his essay, "Consequences"—from which Bizzell cites his term, "theory nope"—that

the lesson of antifoundationalism is not only that external and independent guides will never be found but that it is unnecessary to seek them, because you will always be guided by the rules or rules of thumb that are the content of any settled practice, by the assumed definitions, distinctions, criteria of evidence, measures of adequacy, and such, which not only define the practice but structure the understanding of the agent who thinks of himself as a "competent member." (440)

Fish's "competent member" implies a member in a community, but such a person would not depend on theory to guide his actions since Fish considers it an isolated activity that operates only to "extend a practice" already well conceived by "rules or rules of thumb." The way to extend the group's practice is to generate new conceptions from old sets of "heuristic questions, or a thematics" (442). But these conceptual tools are only viable in relation to some belief or set of beliefs. And here he makes an important distinction between beliefs and theories:

A theory is a special achievement of consciousness; a belief is a prerequisite for being conscious at all. Beliefs are not what you think about but what you think with, and it is within the space provided by their articulations that mental activity—including the activity of theorizing—goes on. Theories

are something you can have—you can wield them and hold them at a distance; beliefs have *you*, in the sense that there can be no distance between them and the acts they enable. (443).

For Fish, beliefs are unaccountably generated by accident and experience. Theory is as separate from this mundane reality as you can get. As far as Fish is concerned, there are no effects of the social in the use of theory. Theory cannot have effects on active, thriving communities that hold their beliefs in tandem and construct their meanings together. Theory and belief are separate and are never brought together for reflection and debate. Therefore, the rational precludes certain precincts of the personal which leave our desires to go fallow and refuse to sprout change.

In response to Fish, Susan Wells says, in another context, that “[t]he pressing problem of the discourses of modernity is not their lack of consequences but the difficulty of opening the intersubjective [see chapter 3 for a full discussion of this important term] links between them, or conducting a broad discourse on the boundaries of knowledge and the conduct of the social” (1996, 217). We can cross these boundaries of discourse and say something more to each other than that we have settled on such and such a belief or that certain rules of thumb work well here but not so well there. There are still opportunities to share our practice with each other and to theorize our potential, not just wield the sword of theory to cut the tendrils of communication that might be trying to connect us. Teaching is the one profession where this hope still seems to survive, and it survives like a virulent weed in the networked classroom. The very metaphor of the network keeps us at least tenuously connected. But how do we proceed from these

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separate worlds of belief—even, and most particularly, on-line—to participate in meaningful practice?

Action, in the form of political action, became one of Pat Bizzell's concerns in the early 1990s. At the conclusion to her essay "Marxist Ideas in Composition Studies" (1991), she renounces her early, social constructionist views—that teachers should initiate students into the discourse community of the university. She recognizes that academic discourse communities can be oppressive. "Community as such fully develops its warm, cordial, convivial overtones—but at the risk of reducing social context to social graces" (59). Bizzell's idea that communities can overly control individuals is different from Joseph Harris's view that the term "community" is no longer workable and should be jettisoned. He wants to substitute "the city" as a metaphor for a workable social (1996, 106). Bizzell believes that community works too well as a coercive space. As mentioned above, since Bizzell's crisis with anti-foundationism, she has been concerned with how to argue for "left-oriented or egalitarian social values" (1992, 27). In "Marxist," she brings Fredric Jameson's political theory to bear on the problem of social manipulation of the individual. I want to focus on what Bizzell says about Jameson's interpretive project: "[H]e seeks to establish its authority through argument that is openly ideologically interested—rhetorical argument—and not through some presumed superior access to reality" (56). Jameson's method gives us purchase on the forces that interact in classrooms around discursive practice and institutional pressure.

Bizzell examines Jameson's book, *The Political Unconscious* (1981), where he imagines "political interpretation" as the "absolute horizon for all reading and all

interpretation" (17). In valuing this kind of reading, he rejects on the one hand, the critic who uses an "antiquarian" relationship with the past that appreciates a period's artifacts as cultural representations plain and simple and on the other, the critic who makes available contemporary texts "in terms of modernist (or more properly, post-modernist) conceptions and language" (17). Jameson instead wants a

genuine philosophy of history . . . capable of respecting the specificity and radical difference of the social and cultural past while disclosing the solidarity of its polemics and passions, its forms, structures, experiences, and struggles, with those of the present day (18)

His goal is a philosophy that sets out to (paraphrasing Marx) "wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity" (19). And all this exists in a meta-narrative called the "political unconscious" from which the critic's job is to force the return of the socially and culturally repressed. This material does not consist of individual subjective content but of forms hardened by ancient use and by those impossible-to-reduce-to-mere-psychological projections (22). These forms are not economic as much as they are ideological and hegemonic. Bizzell says that

Jameson modifies earlier versions of the concept of hegemony. In some Marxist analyses, dominant classes exercise their ideological control so thoroughly that the very people they are oppressing assent to the oppression. The marginalized agree that they deserve to be marginalized and, instead of hating their exploiters, wish only to become like them. Jameson suggests that while this hegemonic process does indeed operate,

its control is never effortless or total. People resist it, with varying degrees of success, and the hegemonic situation is never static. (57)

This uneven control by hegemonic power is exactly the sense I have of what happens in the interchanges in the networked classroom. Bizzell's fears of group manipulation are well founded, but they take substantial effort to enforce. The speed and flexibility of the writing technology in electronic classrooms on one hand tends to reduce responses by making the forms more uniform, while on the other, it allows for faster communication and more involvement by students.

I continue in the next section with Bizzell's idea that students can achieve a certain independence in discourse communities, and I add a discussion of Jay Robinson's project to teach every sort of student to write. Bizzell's theories seem to provide the space to accommodate Robinson's egalitarianism—an example of theory extending practice. And it might then be extended even further to help me theorize on-line classroom communities, which I do more fully in chapter 3.

Practice

Teaching, Social Change, and Community

Patricia Bizzell's early essay, "Cognition" (1982), revives a more optimistic (and politically naive) view of the progress of social construction which has been erased by the backlash against theory of the late 1980s and early 1990s. I do this because I believe that within the optimism created by the charge to teach underprepared students, that we were given the opportunity to see more clearly our classroom goals than we do today. Students are fully capable of learning to consider and to evaluate the political pressures academic

discourse places upon them. This twenty-year-old discussion is important to me because it reflects upon my own study of technology in the classroom. Students in the networked classroom are also smart enough to judge what is being done to them is invasive. We should give them credit for adapting to these circumstances in creative and interesting ways. They are going to use the technologies emerging in the culture no matter what we say about them. It is to our benefit to add these technologies to our teaching repertoire, so that we can help them mediate their effects.

In what might be considered a foolhardy statement, Bizzell says that a writing instructor's task is "not only to convey information [about writing] but also to transform students' whole world view" (1982, 75). This call for transformation of a student's world view was subsequently applied to thinking about transforming the first year composition course from a skills-based course to a course sensitive to the way writing constructs knowledge about self and community. Bizzell's idea that "educational problems associated with language use should be understood as difficulties with joining an unfamiliar discourse community" (87) was just one trend developed in the wake of Mina Shaughnessey's *Errors and Expectations*. It was meant as a call to action and as a plea to those engaged in student remediation to think seriously about what they were doing. Social construction in composition studies started with a focus on remediation.

At the time—the early 1980s—Bizzell's belief in the power of discourse communities to affect students through their writing was opposed to the theories of the cognitivists Flower and Hayes. The cognitivists defined students' mental processes as specific features in the brain that could be improved by training, while the "outer-

directed," social constructionists like Bizzell believed that students had to be assimilated into the discourse community of the university in order to be successful college students in general and college writers in particular. According to Bizzell, the cognitivists wanted "to discover writing processes that are so fundamental as to be universal" (77), while the social constructionists "believe that universal, fundamental structures can't be taught; thinking and language use can never occur free of a social context that conditions them" (79). In retrospect, this social constructionist view has locked teachers and students into imagining fewer discourse possibilities for the classroom. I will argue, however, that networked classrooms expand the possibilities for discourse which allow student subjects to be constructed differently.

Yet there was a sense of freedom within boundaries for social constructionists that always bespoke possibilities. This freedom has expanded to the degree that on-line classrooms now give students synchronous possibilities for discussion, conferencing, and critique. These possibilities for students—the effects of the social on writing—at least in her early writing, allowed Bizzell to observe a certain independence achieved by students in discourse communities within the academic. This independence allows that

some kinds of thinking and language-using are not obviously either appropriate or inappropriate; they are open to debate. An individual who abides by the community's conventions, therefore, can still find areas for initiative—adherence is slavish adherence only for the least productive community members. These "open" areas may be the unsolved problems of the community, experiences that remain anomalous in the community's

interpretive scheme, or they may be areas the community has never even considered dealing with. (1982, 88)

These "open areas" could be occupied if the stakeholders (in this case, the teacher and her students) were sufficiently persuasive according to existing community standards. The new thinking that was the result of establishing a classroom discourse community had to fit somehow into the old—the more or less well-established commonplaces of teaching and learning—so there was a lessening of the cognitive dissonance associated with new ideas.

The lessening of dissonance attributed to the formation of classroom discourse communities never had a totalizing effect, as we've seen from our discussion of Jameson. Bizzell's openings pop up continually in the on-line classroom. Jay Robinson centers his practice in such openings.

Jay Robinson's important essay "Literacy in the Department of English" has several historical reasons to be. He uses his text to reject the call by Horner (1983) (made in the title of her MLA book) to create bridges between literature and composition. He rejects bridge building because he believes English departments won't be able to teach the multiple kinds of literacies needed by a diverse student body. I will ignore Robinson's first concern in this essay with the disciplinary disparities between literature and composition to concentrate on the need to teach diverse students and the ways this kind of teaching is important for teaching in the networked classroom.

In his work, Robinson describes a diverse and a marginally prepared student body—the types of students he feels appear in classes at most state-supported institutions

of higher education. These types of students are probably much like the students we see today in our writing classes. I feel current students in state-supported colleges are more diverse, and they are less accepting of a univocal discourse.

I want to take Robinson's ideas concerning teaching diverse students and analyze the new pedagogical space of on-line writing classrooms. His felt need to teach every sort of student how to write will also be the job of on-line classrooms. Also, I appreciate his desire for a common language and the way that discourse production has a history and a home in writing classrooms. I present these ideas below and return to them in subsequent chapters when I interrogate the formation and maintenance of networked writing classrooms.

Diversity

Community is made possible only when diversity and its expression are made equally possible. —Robinson (78)

Robinson's concern for student diversity is revealed in a key passage, quoting from Lanham:

If our students are no longer similar in color, background, language, aims, or aspirations, the world of ideas they will encounter in the academy is no less diverse. "The felt center for studying man [sic]," says Lanham, the renegade Renaissance scholar, "is shifting from the traditional humanities to other disciplines in much the same way that the traditional European focus for Western thought has now diffused throughout the globe." He speaks of a "new humanist curriculum" constructed from sources of

literature so wide as to include evolutionary biology. (73)

This “felt center” has many permutations, many identities, even many centers—for our purposes, a necessary contradiction. The Network has made a major contribution to fixing and proliferating these centers, and our students will be working in these networked centers. It is our duty to help secure their places on it while at the same time give them the tools to critique its power over them.

Robinson reminds us that along with diversity and cross disciplinarity, we can expect different kinds of discourse. He uses terms from Clifford Geertz and Anthropology to suggest that these discourses—scholarly and otherwise—“are more than just intellectual coigns of vantage but are ways of being in the world. . . . Those roles we think to occupy turn out to be minds we find ourselves to have” (Geertz 155 qtd. 74). These minds are our minds as teacher/scholars, but they can also be the minds of our students. We can teach them to produce writing that reflects the work of these minds in our writing classrooms. What then are we to teach if we want to recognize and appreciate these differences?

When I teach a composition class, I must remember that my cultural frames are not my students’ or theirs mine. I must remember that their experiences are neither mine, nor something I want to appropriate by investing them with my meanings. And yet, I want them to learn; and yes, I want to work with them toward common meanings, meanings that we can share, meanings that will make possible the possibility of a common language, a public discourse made of and constitutive both of self and community. (78)

My goal in the networked classroom is to uncover and theorize this common language and community. On-line writing technology has a particular way of accepting multiple discourses, while at the same time it provides a common language and access to language. But often the machine does not run smoothly, or runs too smoothly, and the system bears down too hard and people resist its encroachments. This phenomenon will be a principle part of chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Resistance

The surest way to destroy a community is to let conflict get out of control. But another sure way is not to entertain conflict as a way to improve group action within community. Robinson acknowledges "disparate discourses that perhaps cannot be negotiated" (126). But he requires that conflict at least be balanced by the "commitment of individuals, a commitment to add to human conversations that foreground ethical existences and emancipatory ends" (126). Teachers cannot require this commitment; they must persuade students to invest themselves in community.

Consensus for the good of the group leaks into Robinson's argument here in the face of what to do with nonnegotiable conflict. I'm not sure he sees commitment covering those who refuse to negotiate, those who, for their own reasons, want to stay in the community, even after negotiation fails, the community bursts apart, and something else takes its place. They are those I want to know more about

Robinson turns away from these "lost souls," those who fail to negotiate classroom community discourse. He's not concerned with the cultural implosion I refer to above since there is a safety net: he claims a "system of invisible discourses" (153) that bind

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student and teacher together in communities of readers and writers. I assume that ferreting out these invisible discourses is the teacher's job. I also imagine that the teacher uncovers these discourses and makes them available to students for critique and thus sets spinning in the web of conversation within community the discourses now made visible until . . . what? Another break down of negotiation by those driven to the pleasures of conversation? Here is where a brave sense in Robinson's writing gives hope to the prospect of crumbling communities that they will reestablish themselves on the basis of new conversations in other contexts. There is no end to speaking and writing. And I might add, there will be no end to writing on-line. Those who speak and write become responsible for other's needs within these new communities. My project then is to discover the new speaking and writing being done in networked writing classroom and examine the needs and desires of these communities.

My interest in writing classrooms described-as-community stems from my own practice as a university writing teacher, nascent writing program administrator, and middling technophile. I've also become interested in the idea of networked communities in order to secure a foothold in a more substantial (by being virtual) outpost of composition theory, that is, the networked-composition classroom. I am attracted to the idea of community because it seems to be, as Harris says, "at once sweeping and vague" (12). My purpose for limiting my discussion to the networked classroom is to limit its range and describe it more fulsomely.

In the next chapter I explore the idea that community and technology can provide an opening for students to do good work for themselves and others. The electronic

writing classroom is a virtual working model of the networked space that is beginning to fill all our lives. Along with the networked classroom, I'm particularly interested in the disciplinary community of computers and writing because members of this community are in the best place to speak for teachers who want to teach writing with computers. This community uses a particular rhetoric of technology that has important consequences for teachers and students. I begin this discussion by providing some historical context for the way technology has been talked about and used in the culture in general and in education in particular.

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CHAPTER TWO
HISTORY AND THE NETWORKED CLASSROOM

Introduction

I do not observe that people are in fact subdivided in ways to be conveniently treated by the "wide variety" of separate disciplines. If you talk separately about their group behavior or their individual behavior, their environment or their characters, their practicality or their sensibility, you lose what you are talking about. We are often forced, for analytic purposes, to study a problem under various departments—since everybody can't discuss everything at once, but woe if one then plans for people in these various departments! One will never create a community, and will destroy such community as exists. —Paul Goodman (*Utopian* xiii)

The ultimate end of technology, as with language, is to make itself invisible while it keeps on working. I came home today to find a maintenance man in the lobby of our apartment complex fiddling with a round, flat metal disk. He was testing it with a meter, trying to see if its circuits were good. We had just gone through several days of false fire alarms and what he held in his hand, he told us, was the problem—a defective heat sensor. At least he hoped it was the problem because he and the fire department were as tired of responding to false alarms in our building as we were of having to exit our apartments into the January cold. He said it would suit him if

he were never called back to fix the sensor or any other part of the system. It would be fine if the thing worked without his intervention. Although he certainly would not want it to need no maintenance, thus putting him out of a job. The sensor he was holding had worked, he told us, undisturbed since the 1950s, so there was a chance the new one he was to install would work as unnoticed. We heartily agreed with him, for the purpose of an alarm system is to signal possible problems and not cause annoying and dangerous false alarms. An alarm that goes off constantly is almost as bad as not having one at all. This is analogous to the boy in the story who cried "wolf" so many times in jest, that when the real wolf came along the townspeople ignored his calls, and he was eaten by the wolf. The technology in this case, the shepherd boy's voice, is (a failed) rhetorical act by the shepherd. The boy's expertise at persuading the townspeople that he needed help broke down, just as the heat sensor in our apartment broke down. The boy lost his audience by his constant crying, just as the alarm started to lose us as audience for its claims. Luckily the "wolf" of a real fire did not appear on any of the occasions of the false alarms we experienced.

My pastoral/technical analogy can be extended and complicated by bringing to bear Kenneth Burke's ([1950] 1969, 27) principle of "identification." He also illustrates by way of the trope of the shepherd:

The human agent, *qua* human agent, is not motivated solely by the principles of a specialized activity, however strongly this specialized power, in its suggestive role as imagery, may affect his character. Any specialized activity participates in a larger unit of action. "Identification" is a word for

the autonomous activity's place in this wider context, a place with which the agent may be unconcerned. The shepherd, *qua* shepherd, acts for the good of the sheep, to protect them from discomfort and harm. But he may be "identified" with a project that is raising the sheep for market. (RM 27)

Burke's purpose in this quotation is to notice unconscious motives and techniques, so they can be taken into consideration. It is often not easy to unscramble such lines of identification. If you don't notice certain identifications, then you may also recognize ones that aren't there. It also brings up the notion of faulty identification, or identification breakdown.

As the boy-who-cried-wolf became identified by the townspeople with the effects his voice was having on them, the fire department and the service man became identified with the sensor whose "voice" had been activated. The townspeople ignored the one while the fireman (and apartment residents) paid attention to the other. In both cases the identification was faulty. The machines, the boy's voice and the sensor, were acting correctly but their motives were misinterpreted. The agents in this case, the boy and the sensor, were to their fault unconcerned with those they identified with. They were "specialists" in Burke's words cut off from the real significance of their actions.

The computer in the writing classroom functions like one of these specialized agents. It does one thing and another, but it cannot understand what needs to be done if the "real wolf" shows up or there is never a "fire" when it thinks there is one. The boy needed a way to adjust his voice to get the townspeople's effective attention. In the same way, teachers can't let the technology control the classroom or to control the kinds of

writing produced by students. Although there is no question that it will always be the sound of the boy's voice we hear there are ways of determining what actions are appropriate in response. One way to follow these actions in the classroom is to see when the machines that surround us have assumed agency. And it is not as if we want to or can prevent this sort of thing from happening. But it bears watching and alerting students (and reminding ourselves) because important lines of identification can be missed if we ignore the most specialized of agents, the machines. This brings us to history, where agentless writing has been institutionalized for centuries. Machines have a place in our history and a place in making that history.

Historiography

Thus, the text of history writing initiates a play between the object under study and the discourse performing the analysis. —Cheryl Glenn

My primary interest in this dissertation, the teaching of writing in network classroom at the university, has its roots in the educational practices of the late nineteenth-century university and in the technological artifact of that era. I am interested in the rhetorical use of these artifacts in the classroom. In this chapter I begin to make a sketch a history of what I call "the rhetorics of technology" and its influence on education. I believe this discourse of progress based in the Age of Invention continues to influence our choices when it comes to technology in the classroom. This history of the effects of the language of technological progress on education will necessarily be a fragmented and an imagined history because technology cannot be said to have been of major instrumental importance for teaching writing in nineteenth-century schools. The most important

technology in classrooms before electrification was the chalkboard. But the changes in education were in many ways subtly and not so subtly influenced by the explosion of technologies during the latter half of the nineteenth century and after.

Schools were just one of the sites in society where inventions like film and radio began to be seen as useful. It is more than a bit ironic that a man like Edison who claimed to see such wide use for film in education had himself no formal education (Cuban). But that is one of the patterns: those with the machinery and the expertise force their way into classrooms by announcing they have the answer to a recalcitrant educational system. This follows from a sense of the cultural importance of technology in the nineteenth century and before, and to our own time. This nineteenth-century culture of invention has many similarities and differences to our present day culture of technology. We still are seduced by the newest techno-bauble that comes out on the market, but we are also surfeit with an underlying pessimism about technology created by "images of Chernobyl, Bhopal, and the Challenger" (Seagull 43). I hope by investigating this early rhetoric of technology that I can gain insights about how language meshes with technology to influence the culture in general and the classroom in particular. Any history masks such ideologies; it is our duty to expose them. But what should be our method be for reading and writing this history and exposing its ideologies?

Traditional lineal histories have become suspect for the very ideologies they support. If the accepted narratives merely glorify the good sense or good fortune of those writing them, then it is incumbent upon us to recover our history in other ways, to create meanings "otherwise." It is not my purpose to write contra-histories but to propose a

historiography that can serve pedagogically. I want to be able to teach students that both fact and fiction are rhetorical, useful to some audience, for some purpose. There is always the fear when writing history that the rhetoric will drop out along the line, for in pursuing other lines of discourse (outside the traditional), we run the risk of producing ideologies as stark and as dominant as the ones we desire to supplant.

In this chapter, I go on the premise that histories are all partial narratives patched up to look complete. Narratives are fragmentary at best, given no possibility of completeness, and exist through sheer force of the writing. Precedents for writing history without the necessary or full record are found in feminist historiography. The following example from Cheryl Glenn is useful for my study of the networked classroom because it gives a way of looking at alternate discourses (histories) and how they can be useful for a particular community. When students find such discourses, they must decide whether they are useful for someone. Technology speeds up the process of gathering discourses, but it also makes us accept the most powerful ones more readily. Feminine historiography highlights these mostly univocal discourses as inadequate and makes us dig deeper in the data stream that is washing over us for alternative voices.

Before I actually get to applying this historiography and other theories to the networked classroom (chapter 3 and 4), I examine several representations of communities to see the ways they integrate history and rhetoric. One report of these communities takes us on the Web (Gurak) and the other is the computers and writing scholarly community (Hawisher and Selfe). I set these examples up by a short history of technology in education, a foray into the philosophy of technology (Heidegger), and an explanation of John Dewey's "publics." But first I want to introduce feminine historiography.

Rhetoric and History

The way a culture uses language to persuade themselves of the benefit and use of objects and ideas says quite a bit about what that culture values. James Berlin explains it this way:

Rhetorics provide a set of rules about the dispositions of discourse at a particular moment. They codify who can and cannot speak (the wealthy but not the poor, men but not women, the certified expert but not the ordinary citizen); what can and cannot be said (the wealthy must be protected from the poor; the expert always knows best); who can and cannot listen and act (men only, the propertied classes only, the certified experts only); and the very nature of the language to be used (the register of the ruling class, the parlance of technocracy, the narratives of patriarchy). Rhetorics do not make these decisions on their own. They are constructed at the junctures of discourse and power, at the points at which economic, social, and political battles are waged in public discourse. To paraphrase Marx, it is within rhetorics that humans become aware of ideological battles and fight them out (Marx 1970, 21) (116)

Berlin does not want to ignore the usefulness of dominant culture rhetorics (like those of Aristotle and Cicero) but when they are used (as he says Burke uses them [*The Rhetoric of Motives* 120]) they must be historicized—made to speak for their “full political and cultural implications [within] the appropriation: differences are here as important as identities“ (121).

I want to turn now to the argument between two feminists, Xin Liu Gale (2000) and Cheryl Glenn, over the legacy of the ancient Greek female rhetorician, Aspasia of Miletus, “an active member of the most famous intellectual circle in Athens, whose influence reached not only Socrates and Pericles but also extended to Plato” (Glenn qtd. in Gale 362). Gale’s quarrel is with Glenn’s methodology or her application of historiography. Gale believes that there is not enough proof for the claims Glenn makes for Aspasia. The problem in obvious terms is that what we know about Aspasia was written about her by men who seem to consider her to be a “*hetaera* (upper-class courtesan).” Glenn believes she had a much more exalted role; she established a school of rhetoric. But Gale sees a deeper struggle beyond the historical claims made about Aspasia:

Thus, how to evaluate and interpret these male texts across time and space become important issues in feminists’ historical research. Above all, working within the confines of the disciplines of rhetoric, classicism, and history—which are still the domains of men and stronghold of Enlightenment rationality, truth, and objectivity—feminist historians are faced with decisions about subjects of inquiry, theory, methodology, and rhetorical strategies in their rebuke of the traditional practices of these disciplines. (362)

Glenn makes her rebuke of these traditional practices by applying gender theory. Gale quotes Glenn:

[B]y contextualizing Aspasia within the gender limits and expectations of her time, I can now explain her political and intellectual influence—and her rhetorical accomplishments—in terms other than the erotic. (36; qtd. in Glenn 365)

Thus Glenn uses rhetoric to de-emphasize the “erotic,” a particularly male category. But, also, her argument is determinedly against what has gone before and thus appears reactive. In reply to this implied criticism, Gale observes that Glenn “[c]ombine[s] the gender “angle” with feminist strategies of resistant reading and reconstruction: to advance “a new definition of historiography: ‘Historiography, reading it crookedly and telling it slant, could help me shape—re-member—a female rhetorical presence (Glenn 8)’” (365).

This “re-membering” of Aspasia can help, Glenn insists, those women (and men) in feminist discourse communities. Gale warns, however, that reliance on these communities (as communities?) can stultify research. She quotes Dasenbrock to make this point. Gale says,

[he] criticizes the current practice that “the theory itself defines what is to count as evidence for it” (586). He believes it is postmodern theory that makes it impossible for us to evaluate methods. For if Enlightenment rationality, scientific objectivity, and universal truth do not exist anymore, we are left with little to discuss about what counts as truth across communities. (369)

Gale is not too concerned that postmodernism is really to blame for the general critical malaise Dasenbrock mentions but nonetheless takes the problem seriously. Her antidote is to cite

Kuhn's (*Scientific Revolutions*) idea of a "scientific community," which she hopes provides her reader a working (antifoundational) community model.

The scientific community, in Kuhn's view, is the complicated social nexus of relationships and social context in which scientific inquiries are pursued, scientific theories are tested, scientific methods are invented and experimented with, truths are discovered, revolutions occur, and paradigms change, all through interactions among various subcommunities and subgroups whose members are differentiated by subjects of inquiry, membership in different professional societies, and journals read. (370)

Such scientific communities would contain and control internal conflict between "subcommunities" in order that the primary community would not get set into ideological plaster. If it did, the social dialectic where Gale is operating from would get it churning to reinvent itself. Gale is suspicious that the research on Aspasia has set up some sort of inviolable paradigm in simple contrast to the masculine history. Aspasia should not be some sort of female rhetorician/heroine who merely replaces that other figure in a history just as fixed. Gale is here to tell those like Glenn that as a member of a feminist community worried about method and historiography, she would like to see a little less dogma and more critical self reflection and historization. She implies that to affect this kind of critique, it is necessary to pay attention to the rhetoric used to write the history of feminist rhetoric. She doesn't seem to note, however, that her own critique of Glenn

could come back to haunt her as just as dogmatic, thus leaving her own theory unfulfilled.

Gale's form of historiography emphasizes Foucault's primacy of language to construct social reality. Foucault's ideas go against those who might want to rely on their particular community to maintain univocal thought in the light of the many voices speaking in/for any particular community.

By writing a discursive history of sexuality and of the prison, Foucault sends the powerful message that truth is created linguistically and is contingent and situated because no truth can come into existence without having gone through all these complex relationships (Prado's five "faces" of truth) that are constitutive of as well as constituted by discourses. To say that truths are simply community-constructed beliefs is evidently a grave misunderstanding of the postmodern notion of truth conceived by Foucault. (370)

Gale seems to be warning against ideology ("community-constructed beliefs") and its identification with community practice. She has no problem questioning a truth that others in the community identify with, a truth that if it were removed, it would put the whole community in jeopardy. Gale's community is a fragile entity defined by the available discourse about and from just one voice in the community—an equally ideological voice. Gale feels that communities want to maintain themselves at all cost even against new, more rational (scientific) truth created somewhere on the margins of such communities. Gale uses Brummett in this context to nail down the inadequacies of unscientific communitarian logic:

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"Community interests" sounds like a fine thing. But the question, "Whose community" could legitimately have been raised in Plato's time as well as today. *Community* means *hegemony*, the dominance of established power interests. . . . To pretend there is a community interest to be served is actually to hide the interests of empowered groups behind the façade of "the community." Those privileged interests are presented as community interests. The "citizens" of Athens in Plato's time, even if they served "community interests," were in fact only about 15 percent of the population. Their community interests were highly partisan. . . . In the unmelted pot of fragmented and diverse American culture, *using rhetoric in the service of "community interests" lends itself more to using rhetoric in the service of entrenched powers and principalities.* (23; final emphasis added Gale 371)

Gale uses Brummett to criticize the way Glenn valorizes her study of Aspasia as a way to make a new feminist community. Gale imagines women embracing Aspasia merely because she was marginalized by men and was not given her due, whatever that may have been. While Gale regrets the paucity of hard facts about Aspasia and especially the lack of extant writing by her, she cannot see Glenn's fictionalization of Aspasia as doing much good. She disagrees that it can help maintain and build a modern feminist community that would identify with this (partial) representation of an active classical, female rhetorician. For Glenn it doesn't matter that there is so little known about Aspasia; she is valuable in herself. She can be filled with whatever scholars like Glenn can imagine to fill her with. This isn't collusion or a trick, for it is done by Glenn in plain sight, but as Foucauldian says according to Gale: "truth is

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created linguistically and is contingent and situated." Her Aspasia will turn into a plaster saint unless the contemporary community finds away to use her rhetorically. Glenn's audience must discover the measure of Aspasia's usefulness. And if Gale is afraid of a new rhetoric replacing the masculinist one perpetrated for the past 2500 hundred years, this might not be a bad idea, but as history, this new feminist rhetoric needs to be as severely questioned as what it opposes. And perhaps "opposition" is the wrong way to look at these different rhetorics. Can't they be just available? Of course, what is available (like available energy) must be used or it atrophies. Can we consider communities as packets of available energy ready to do work but always at cross purposes? It becomes a fortunate bit of fate when a community can find certain texts to guide its motions. Something that is both "constitutive of as well as constituted by [its own] discourses" (Gale on Foucault 370). We don't say the "hand of fate" for nothing because there is always someone behind such choices. But what happens when a truly oppositional text surfaces and begs for notice? Will the community pay attention to it?

James Berlin believes in the efficacy of unearthing oppositional texts for their own sake.

The historian who sees no reason to search for the rhetorical texts of those out of power at a particular moment has made an ideological decision, not a choice of fact. The contention here is that history is the record of great and conspicuous events and great and conspicuous people—the winners of history, however ill-gotten their gains. All else is mere backdrop, mere stage and setting for this more significant (sic) action. These interpretive

decisions, furthermore, are based on a utopian gesture, a vision of the world as it ought to be. (121)

Berlin acknowledges this utopian urge and participates in it himself when he valorizes "certain Sophists as the most fruitful demonstration of rhetoric in ancient Greece because they offer the best precedent for a modern democracy" (122). His ideology as part of the group who want to rehabilitate the sophists (Jarrett 1991; Vitanza 1987) creeps in to contradict what he's about the sophists who come off as the losers in a fight that is still going on between philosophy and rhetoric—a fight that will never get sorted out (Fish *Rhetoric* 206). Derrida, according to John Schilb, has a more practical solution to this flip flopping from one side of a dualism to the other:

In "Plato's Pharmacy," he [Derrida] warns against any "slogan or password of a 'back-to-the-sophists' nature," declaring his interest in "some entirely-other of *both* sophistic and Platonism, some resistance having no common denominator with this whole commutation" (1981a, 108). While he does not ignore the Sophists, he strives to displace any focus upon them, favoring theorists and principles that elude the conventional opposition of Sophists and Platonists (also see Olson 1990). One of deconstruction's most illuminating moves is, in fact, to avoid simply reversing classic ethical dualism and instead to question dualism itself. (132)

Exchanging one master for another, the sophists for the Platonists, for instance, ignores the material, situated, and perhaps fundamentally unknowable status of those

living at the time. Schilb/Derrida are interested in a multivocal past, not one conceived by the antagonism of simple dualisms. They acknowledge that the past is always a "usable past."

What I have learned from Glenn and Gale is that recovered truth often comes to prominence for the rhetorical purposes of a community. Gale says that the new truth, however stabilizing it may be, always marginalizes some other part of the group. Histories codify who can and cannot speak, but revisionist histories operate the same way. The only solution is to remain vigilant and self-reflexive. In this spirit, I read the histories and the rhetorics I present in the next sections of this chapter.

A History of Technology

In his book, *American Genesis: A Century of Invention and Technology Enthusiasm, 1870-1970*, Thomas P. Hughes provides this definition of technology—a complex matter, he notes, something not contained within a single definition.

For many people, technology is goods and services to be consumed by the affluent and longed for by the poor. Others, such as inventors and engineers, see technology as the creation of the means of production for these goods and services. Further up the ladder of power and control, the great system builders, people like Ford, find consumingly interesting the organizing of the material world into great systems of production. Still others analyzing modern technology find rational method, efficiency, order, control, and system to be its essence. Taking into consideration the infinite aspects of technology, the best that I can do is to fall back on a general

definition that covers much of the activity described in this book.

Technology is the *effort* to organize the world for problem solving so that goods and services can be invented, developed, produced, and used. The reader, however, can accept instead of a definition the historian's traditional approach of naming a subject and defining it by examples of his or her choice. (5-6)

Teachers may not on a regular basis be either inventors, or system builders, but they certainly are problem solvers. And if there is a machine that can assist an overworked, responsible teacher to help a bored, under-motivated student to learn, then that machine is wanted. Teachers have always tried to improve their craft by studying and researching the best methods of teaching. Teaching is as complex as the next student that enters the classroom door hungry for knowledge. Such complexity has often been at the mercy of those who would like to streamline pedagogy and its application in the classroom. Machines of various sorts from the movie projectors to TVs, to computers, to business sponsored techniques like Total Quality Management, have and are being employed to make learning more efficient. But teaching is not an exercise in efficiency no matter what device or system is placed between the teacher and the student. Yet the viability of efficiency practices will not go away because they are usually driven by forces outside the academy. It is best that we investigate their origins and then see what sorts of effects they have on modern classrooms. My analysis of efficiency programs starts with the originator of modern efficiency, Frederick W. Taylor.

Taylor and Efficiency

During the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, technology began to influence more and more peoples' lives. The culture was energized (and organized) by inventions like the electric light, the phonograph, and the telephone. This nascent technological culture spurred both industrial and business progress and further innovation. It also played an important role in the development of higher education. Technology was responsible in an indirect way for the need to train young people to take their positions in this new and progressive economy where not only innovation but efficiency was stressed. College graduates were increasingly employed as managers in factories because their specialized training enabled them to organize the workplace in more specialized and efficient ways. Frederick W. Taylor and Henry Ford codified this ideology of efficiency in complex technical systems that became the assembly line method of manufacture. During this time the concept of "efficiency" glommed onto the word technology and began to determine its use.

The modern application of efficiency is that complex set of ideas and rules introduced by Taylor around the turn of the century. It brought as many problems into the workplace and into the classroom as it solved. According to Thomas P. Hughes, an historian of technology, Taylor

broke down complex sequences of motions into what he believed to be the elementary ones and then timed these as performed by workers whom he considered efficient in their movements. Having done this analysis, he synthesized the efficiently executed component motions into a new set of

complex sequences that he insisted must become the norm. He added time for unavoidable delays, minor accidents, inexperience, and rest. The result was a detailed set of instructions for the worker and a determination of time required for the work to be efficiently performed. This determined the piecework rate; bonuses were to be paid for faster work, penalties for slower. He thus denied the individual worker the freedom to use his body and his tools as he chose. (191)

Hughes says Taylor had a Puritan's (actually he was Quaker) disdain for those who would "soldier" or "goldbrick"—we now refer to them as slackers. Although the slacker, then as now, had a certain standing in society, especially in a bad situation, and especially if he had the wiles to appropriate an employer's time for his own gain. Hughes tells us that efficiency training brought widespread and class-based repudiation by workers of universal efficiency measures:

Many workers were unwilling, especially the skilled ones, to give control of their bodies and their tools to the scientific managers, or, in short, to become components in a well-planned system. An increase in pay often did not compensate for their feeling of loss of autonomy. Taylor's scientific analysis did not take into account worker independence and pride in artful craftsmanship—even artful soldiering. (195)

The unwillingness of workers to participate in the breaking down of complex motions into elementary ones has always been one of the problems associated with machine-human interaction. The fear that the worker has is that their person, whose efficient production is

being monitored, will become irrevocably a part of the machine itself. A powerful language had to be developed to persuade people to become parts of the machine. I call this persuasive language the "rhetorics of technology"—the art of inventing, arranging, and delivering *machine-mediated* language for the purpose of evoking action by a particular audience (Johnson 22-23). In a further complication, the human rhetor may be subsumed into the agency of the machine. That, perhaps, is the ultimate end of perfect efficiency.

Transformation

One way to examine how technology became synonymous with efficiency both in society in general and in education in particular is to study the "rhetorics of technology." What I mean by this term is not just the language used to promote technology, but the way technology acts rhetorically—its agency. A rhetorics of technology, the way a society is motivated by techno-symbolic language, is important for understanding that society at a particular historical moment. Clarke and Halloran (1993) provide a historiographic method to understand such a rhetoric when they concentrate on nineteenth-century rhetorical discourse, which reflects the age's desire to understand itself socially and understand its response to technological progress.

In their "Introduction," Clark and Halloran show the way rhetorical theory transformed itself in relation to the social during the nineteenth century. They begin by discussing the nature of public speech at the time of the Revolutionary War in America. Our founding father's "discourse enacted the neoclassical assumption that moral authority in a community is located in the public consensus of its members rather than in their

individual private convictions" (2). This argument is important for me because technology and its gathering prominence throughout the nineteenth century helped break the back of this oratorical/communal rhetoric. Clark and Halloran argue that the oratorical culture of the early nineteenth century

was transformed by an emerging individualistic spirit that, in diverse social and institutional forms, challenged the traditional principle of collective moral authority by establishing as a new principle the moral authority of the individual. . . . [T]his authority was itself transformed by the political and economic complexities of a rapidly expanding nation into the authority of the expert and that it was this new public morality of expertise that defined the professional culture we see characterizing the United States by the end of that century. (3)

In order to talk about this change they employ Burke's term "transformation":

a process through which "the position at the start can eventually be seen in terms of the new motivation encountered enroute." That is, we use the term to suggest that as the political and economic realities of the American community changed during the nineteenth century, its public discourse, in theory as well as in practice, changed as well. The term transformation enables us to bear in mind Burke's advice that, while such a change in motivation may appear to observers (such as historians) as "a kind of jolt or inconsistency," to those who experienced the change it appeared to be simply the natural progress of things (422). In doing so it provides us with

the method we are using both to understand oratorical culture in its own terms and to remain skeptical of any teleological grounded explanations that we might want to impose as we examine the ways in which that culture changed. (3)

Burke's idea of "transformation" allows us to see the discourses of specialization which were spawned by industrialization collect in the new public higher education and transform it from its neo-classical instantiation to a system more in line with efficiency and assembly line theories of mass organization. This give and take between machine use and culture is a "dynamic tendency toward responsive transformation" (4) between the material conditions of life and technological discourses that carry and enable machine/human life.

However, Clark and Halloran say that oratorical culture—and for that matter techno-culture—should not be looked upon as an "origin."

Rather, it becomes a point on a line of descent that enables us to identify and evaluate historical forces that contributed to the construction of its descendent—here the inherited discourse culture we are characterizing as professional. In doing so, this essay presents a particular narrative of transformation providing what we believe is a useful explanation of what happened to the theory and practice of rhetoric in the United States during the nineteenth century. We present this narrative as a "representative anecdote" in the sense that Burke ([1945] 1969) uses the term—as a case that exemplifies what we mean by transformation used as a guiding methodological term. (4-5)

The point of descent Clark and Halloran end with at the close of the nineteenth century contains several different rhetorics: the general discourse culture they speak of, the school subject, and a rhetoric of technology among others. These rhetorics begin to track "two closely related factors: the growth of individualism as a central cultural value and the increasing specialization of knowledge leading to a similarly specialized academic discourse. Teachers and practitioners of rhetoric alike came to conceive public life primarily as a context for individual self-definition and action" (8). In the twentieth century, technology was to become parasitic on this discourse of individualism and specialization. Teacher problem solving linked to efficiency makes for a powerful rhetoric. Yet there is a free wheeling sense to this rhetoric since the proliferation of technology. The machine isolates individuals, but it also has a tendency to allow them to come together in a new solidarity. Taylorism influenced the rise of labor movements. As we will see in the next section, machine use is conflicted and can be organized differently. Understanding the rhetorical uses for the machine is key.

Heidegger

Most workers in today's economy work far too much and are too afraid for their jobs to risk "soldiering" on the job. The exception is the young and highly educated dot.com worker who has been seduced by stock options and for personal financial reasons would not "soldier." The reasons one would slack off or be a workaholic come down to the same thing: the corporation controls the worker's labor. And to make matters worse, electronic technology has given employers panoptic power over their employees. The subtext of the promise students are given when schools boast of the efficacy of computer training for high tech jobs is that such a system has become merciless in its control of workers' bodies.

However, technology has also sponsored a contra-organizational turn as well as the Taylorist bent we've been talking about. I begin this discussion of an alternative view of the mechanization of worker's (and student's) bodies by discussing Martin Heidegger's thoughts on technology.

Herbert Dreyfus gives us insight into this form of body snatching with an analogy he takes from Heidegger:

He [Heidegger] tells us that a modern airliner, understood in its technological essence, is not a tool we use; it is not an object at all, but rather a flexible and efficient cog in the transportation system. Likewise, we are not subjects who use the transportation system, but rather we are used by it to fill planes. (Hubert L. Dreyfus "Heidegger on the Connection Between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics. 306).

If we substitute computers for airplanes in the above quotation they become "flexible and efficient cog[s]" in the educational system. Students and faculty do not use computers as much as they are used by them and used by institutions to enforce efficiency, thus producing a totalizing effect that computers perform in education.

Dreyfus reads this Heideggerian technological essence not as the fear that machines will destroy, pollute, or otherwise damage the world; the real fear resides in how technology makes us think, what he calls "calculative thinking." This kind of thinking has already become common "The essence of modern technology, Heidegger tells us, is to seek to order everything so as to achieve more and more flexibility and efficiency . . . optimal ordering, *for its own sake*" (305-06).

For Heidegger this essence is historically determined; yet, he adds, "efficiency for its own sake is not the *only* end for man, dictated by reality itself, but is just our current understanding" (308). He does not reject technology but rejects a technological way of thinking and acting—a specific rhetoric of technology. Such a rejection does not provide us with an agenda, it merely hints at what Heidegger calls a "new rootedness." One way to expose, as he terms it, this "new god" is to "learn to appreciate marginal practices" (310). Actions we do for their own sake such as looking at a beautiful sunset or enjoying conversation with a good friend (all outside/inside technology), are not a part of the efficiency of technology, though technology in many cases enables their practice. Technology provides a "clearing" where marginal things can be experienced in a "free relation to technology" (309). Heidegger calls this way of acting "releasement towards things." Yet this releasement cannot provide the peace and escape from nihilism and alienation; it can only provide a path to this "new understanding of being." I am certain that this path rises within the social.

The material effects of the social on the rise of technology, individualism, and the specialization of labor have had profound influence on the nature and practice (path) of community. Technology can provide such a "clearing" in the form of a community of committed individuals. In this type of community, workers' and students' bodies are in a "free relationship" to each other and to technology—a relationship, which becomes a tool for freedom instead of a repressive object.

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So far, we have considered problem solving as a lure (the rhetoric) of technology that entices professionals like teachers to employ "calculative thinking" when using technology, instead of being released to think of technology as a place to employ a "free relationship" in their classrooms. I would like to take these ideas one step closer to the writing classroom by investigating John Dewey's concept of the "public," which is one antidote for the loss of community due to technology progress and instrumental thinking.

The Public

John Dewey differentiates between community and the state by considering kinds of private versus public actions. He states that the line between community and the state can "be drawn on the basis of the extent and scope of the consequences of acts which are so important as to need control, whether by inhibition or by promotion" (15). The state intervenes to inhibit and promote, otherwise members of the community must figure out what must be done among themselves. These concerns in effect have nothing to do with the state. Dewey's inevitable goal is to describe what individuals in communion can do to produce the good without the help of the state. This is his concern with the "public."

This public for Dewey is a constructed space that determines the nature of the association, or community, and not the other way around. "Thus man (sic) is not *de facto* associated, but he *becomes* a social animal in the make-up of his ideas, sentiments and deliberate behavior" (25). And there are historical reasons for the way ideas held communally changed the social landscape. Dewey speculates that during the latter half of the nineteenth century, communities became more sensitive to the power "of personal

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judgment and choice in the formation of intellectual conclusions [when] social mobility and heterogeneity had brought about initiation and invention in technological matters and industry, and until secular pursuits had become formidable rivals to church and state" (50). He links the new communities formed by innovation during the nineteenth century with "secular pursuits" (i.e. capitalism and consumerism) to explain why communities became more independent and more restive of state control. But again, invention (technology) is not the work of the state; it represents what a sophisticated public, left alone to pursue its own care does with this freedom—they innovate. And they do this because they have been left to assemble freely.

There are social problems that develop from this freedom to innovate when the technology produces changes in behavior that now seem unnatural (58). Dewey warns of the "insidious" nature of the changes brought on by technology. He believes, that if people had known the ultimate use that certain machines were to be put to, they would have destroyed them immediately. And there is a connection here between those items that have encouraged the proportion and efficiency of war and those who have been important as warriors, for as Dewey remarks, in a digression: "the ability of a man to win battles has seemed to mark him out as a predestined manager of the civil affairs of a community" (79).

Thus the outcome of technological advances and commercial application "was followed," Dewey says, "by the creation of new powerful social conditions, personal opportunities and wants" (89). This condition, produced by technological advances, he claims "is the outstanding fact of modern life" (98). This modern sort of life started, at

least in America, in small rural communities which were "mainly agricultural and where production was carried on mainly with hand tools" (111). These artisans made their communities prosperous which meant even better and more efficient techniques had to be found to insure continued growth. And with these changes social problems developed.

But Dewey does not think that technology is the problem. Communities recognize and respond to what is good for them, which is progress. And progress means technology. What will sustain this good should be, he says, something that is shared by the community at large. This is the nature of community. The consciousness of this good within the community, what this implies, "constitutes the idea of democracy" (149). What we often see, however, is merely the effects of democratic association; the demands of the communal and the analysis of this discourse in order to discover the tropes active in producing meaning. Otherwise the action of community cannot be regulated and change cannot be effected.

In a word, that expansion and reinforcement of personal understanding and judgment by the cumulative and transmitted intellectual wealth of the community which may render nugatory the indictment of democracy drawn on the basis of the ignorance, bias and levity of the masses, can be fulfilled only in the relations of personal intercourse in local community. (218)

Thus the conversations and other interactions ("relations of personal intercourse") between individuals based in community have the ability to enable and transmit knowledge that will sustain the democratic basis of the local community. Such conversations

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can, at the very least, allay the cynicism of those who reject a democracy, which seems to have failed. Democracy never fails from inside if those intent on talking to one another see the efficacy of communal work. It is always the helpless gaze from outside the community, from those waiting to partake of democracy that seems to have no effect on those inside. This is a major failing of Dewey's vision. He does not see the effects of the power differentials among groups. His public feels like equal groupings of vibrant individuals with no outsiders.

Yet Dewey's public, made up of integrated communities, has a chance, he says, to balance a technology that must be regulated from within the social if it is not to get out of control. The power of the technical cannot be the right of a few men. In fact, if that happens, then innovation ceases. The reason that groups exist and individuals associate in groups, is to innovate for the good of the group.

I am not sure that Dewey's optimism for group behavior has survived the horrors of mid and late twentieth century forms of political mass culture like fascism, nazism, various forms of communism, and our own suffocating late-capitalist consumer culture. But we still talk of and create communities. Dewey's theories of community give us an historical basis, as well as provide a springboard for thought, when we find ourselves forming communities in spaces and in ways Dewey could not have imagined. But what are more modern communities, especially those proposed for the Web, really like? And what might they tell us for the prospects of on-line classroom communities. The next section deals with on-line communities.

Modern Electronic Communities

Current perceptions of the effects of on-line technology center around those who think technological advances presage dire circumstances (Rifkin 1995, Stoll 1995,

Doheny-Farina 1996), those who think it has brought us to the verge of an actual utopia (Negroponte 1995, Gates, Myhnold, and Rinearson 1995), and those like Faigley (1992) and Gurak (1997) who want to chart a path between the hazards of technology to see its promise. Neither Faigley nor Gurak are naïve about the dangers. Both study populations that interest me.

Faigley writes about two networked college composition courses he taught during the late 1980s, while Gurak conducts a rhetorical study of two different Internet mass protest movements. Both are concerned with how groups of people come together to do something on computers—carry on a class discussion, on the one hand, and correct a perceived wrong on the other. I am interested in their accounts because they describe how on-line groups form and maintain communities.

Faigley and Gurak give me a way to begin to talk about my own classroom and my students. In what follows, I deal with Gurak's rhetorical study of on-line communities in order to advance my own analysis of on-line teaching community. In the next chapter, I use Faigley's networked classroom to introduce my own on-line classroom case study.

Gurak's study is an example of Dewey's "public." That is, the communal attempt to produce the good without the help of the state. The question I have is: Whose good is advocated in her case studies? The citizen groups' or the corporation's?

Gurak observes that there are two problems with studies of computer-mediated communications (CMC): 1) insufficient consideration is made of the

"context of the interaction and therefore may not be relevant outside their specific subject pool and experimental setting" (4), and 2) a deep-seated utopianism associated with CMC describes it "as the great equalizer in terms of status, decision making, and individual power—a position," she adds, "that is beginning to be called into question (Spears and Lea 1994)" (4). Gurak seeks to foreground the specific and complex contexts of her on-line groups, and at the same time, look at them with a critical eye.

Gurak examines the effects of the rhetorical terms, *delivery* and *ethos*, on two on-line citizen-action groups. Both cases deal with privacy issues. One case deals with the Lotus Marketplace data base program, a proposed direct mail program that contained millions of names and addresses. It was to be marketed to direct mail advertisers so they could more efficiently target consumers. The other case deals with the government's Clipper Chip, which was a proposed encryption computer chip that promised to be the standard for securing information on the Internet. People found it abhorrent that the government (i.e., Big Brother) would be controlling such technology. Lotus was defeated by a grassroots uprising of on-line advocates for citizens' rights. The Clipper chip was withdrawn after a storm of protest by an organized set of privacy groups. Each protest used the Internet to wage their campaigns and e-mail was the mode of delivery.

Gurak's study puts these events in their rhetorical context. She says: "What these cases suggest, then, is that the rhetorical dynamics of *delivery* and *ethos* are powerful, but that the ultimate uses of these and all rhetorical skills in on-line communication technology are governed not by some determined set of technological forces but rather by human agency" (7). And, she adds, the structure we apply to the "design and use of the

technology will bring with it certain social implications" (7). She implies that the set of social implications is on the whole positive. She suggests, however, that those who forecast an endless bright future for CMC really cannot tell what this future will bring, nor can they assume that "the future has already happened and is simply waiting for us to reach it." She bases her claim that the future is indeterminate, on the rhetorical nature of the examples she cites. Lotus and Clipper were canceled by communities that were formed for the very purpose of social action. But the types of social action that will develop in the future cannot be predicted.

I want to complicate her view by thinking back to Burke's (cited in Clark and Halloran 3) idea of "transformation": "the position at the start can eventually be seen in terms of the new motivation encountered enroute." It might seem from Gurak's point of view that personal agency (the position at the start) is the whole story, but we need also to hold Dewey's ideas in mind, that the social (community) changes those ideas (by way of a new motivation) that are fed through it. They are changed over time and changed as they react to other ideas and forces going on at the same time. Gurak's teleological agency ignores the power of technology to change culture while it is being used by that very culture.

In a further complication of Gurak's view, the future that Gurak disdains is not any sort of future at all, but the near past of the Lotus and Clipper campaigns projected forward as failed rhetorical practice. It's true that she rejects the methods of the corporation who thinks it can move about on-line with impunity. I suspect that the constituency she is really directing her critique is not the advocacy groups *but* the

corporation. At least, the corporation can read her advice with considerable interest. For Gurak, on-line communities are merely reactive, susceptible to the rhetorical skills of the corporation. She might seem, therefore, to counsel those on-line businesses who will produce future Lotus or Clipper programs to get with it, to get rhetorical, to understand their audiences (read consumer) better.

Gurak's statement that those of us interested in information technologies can choose the way we want these on-line communities to operate is self serving. The problem (for the corporation) is to understand the nature of an on-line user's agency when it comes to these technologies. One way to do this is to study these users in community, and often, to construct a community for them. For, in Gurak's examples, those who protested on-line "displayed a common culture through their use of language and special symbols." She continues, "they were engaged in purposeful social action in a public arena, which suggests . . . the idea of these communities as persuasive or rhetorical bodies" (11-12). Her cases illustrate the "rhetorical intent" of such communities "to debate and protest in a public arena, to make change, and to bring about action" (12). Here she implies that these on-line communities are thoroughly predictable. They sprout up like mushrooms after a spring rain. Their very lack of materiality forces them to act in only one direction. I'm not saying that on-line communities don't, and didn't in Gurak's cases, have legitimate problems to raise, but their motivation is limited by their expressions of anger. These on-line communities have no "place" to fix knowledge; they are left to emote. Not to say that these reactions are not effective, they are, as evidenced by Lotus and Clipper. But such communities are easily manipulated by emotions like anger.

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Anger is the motivating factor in the Lotus and Clipper episodes, and for Gurak, *ethos* is the salient rhetorical feature of these on-line protest communities. She defines ethos in contemporary terms as “the character, tenor, or tone of a rhetor” (13). She describes the ethos of the Lotus protest group as “personal, angry, and antagonistic” and that of the Clipper group as “also angry but at times . . . highly technical.” Each group’s ethos “appealed to others of similar persuasion and made it easy to spread the word to others of similar beliefs” (13). She seems to be saying that anger serves as sufficient ethos to galvanize these protests. It seems a shallow ethos to be sure—more like *pathos* (i.e., an appeal to human emotion [Crowley 1999]). Nevertheless, according to Gurak’s unstated appeal, the on-line corporation should try not to be the target of such anger because it is especially corrosive to their policies. The suggestion is: that the corporation should take a subtler approach to the problem of on-line rhetoric.

A self-interest, unmediated by self reflection or the type of group review that Dewey suggests, motivates participation in Gurak’s on-line communities and forms their ethics. She connects her critique of these groups’ methods to the classical notions of *ethos* with ethics. “[I]t is not just the projection of the character of a speaker or group, but also his (or her, or the group’s) actual moral and ethical character that is relevant to both the effectiveness and the quality of the speech” (15). But here’s the problem: “In on-line discourse, the ethical character of the speaker is often unchallenged [since] [i]ndividuals can be accepted as moral and credible even though the many recipients of an Internet message have never met the authors [, . . . consequently] the ethos of the texts, not the character of the speaker . . . does not . . . convince others” (15-16). We are

forced to judge on-line text by its stylistics. In this passage, Gurak moves swiftly from ethics of the group to the ethics of the texts the group produces.

Gurak provides a key to understanding what she means by ethics when she talks about the etymology of the Greek word *ethos*: "habitual meeting place." She adds: "[W]e can see that people come to acquire a community ethos by inhabiting a space and learning its unique communicational characteristics" (15). Implicit in what she says are questions about how we understand an on-line group's ethics that extend to the practice of "flaming" (Lea et al. 1992 and Rice and Love 1987)—a practice that disciplines newbies trying to break into an existing on-line community. Flaming is for Gurak a mechanism to "assimilate [them into] the community ethos, and where . . . community ethos is the basis for what information other on-line participants will accept and believe" (15). In the case of Lotus and Clipper, flaming seems to be a way to modulate the force of a group's ethos and it certainly chases off as many (especially female) posters to networks than it attracts.

Yet, mere anger could not have kept Gurak's on-line communities together. Instead, their anger was motivated by self-interest, which let them focus on the "text," i.e., the perceived wrong done to them by the corporation. Their anger and a perceived wrong made these anonymous e-mailers into a community, but not a community that reflected their own agency as much as it was a result of the corporation's moves into their space. It was as if the corporation invented their own protest community by their bumbling marketing strategies. It only stands to reason then, that with a little coaching, corporations could create effective strategies against the kind of communities Gurak profiles in her book.

Gurak describes these "new communities" with a certain relish, and considers her on-line protest movements to be a "new kind of community." Both the Lotus and Clipper protest communities were, she says: "linked by common values; yet in the cyberforum, these links were not limited by physical distance or time. Participants moved easily from place to place, forming and reforming communities with a fluid and dynamic quality" (8). One might also say that these communities are particularly fragile and effervescent and the people in them cannot by the nature of their association commit to a project long term. There are many features of on-line communication that affect stability of these communities, not the least of which is delivery. There is not space here to do justice to the many features of on-line communication that affect communities, but I will touch on two of them.

The two salient features of these communities that deserve mention are: 1) they permit a person to "lurk" and 2) members can easily "fine-tune" their participation in any one particular on-line community. Members are not forced to stay in these on-line communities longer than necessary. This cafeteria approach to choosing a community on-line effectively side-steps the dynamic of margin/center transactions. In these cases, political activism is reduced to protecting self interest motivated by anger, and not in listening to the concerns of others nor in trying to resolve issues with those who disagree with you. On-line protest communities are focused toward a single end, much like the ballot initiative or state proposition, that by simple majority vote can circumvent the legislative process of a state's elected representatives.

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Gurak has highlighted both the peril and the promise of on-line communities. They are an intensely rhetorical. On-line environments definitely provide a "clearing" where "freeing claims" can abide. But just as possible are zones where those who feel most secure because they experience this freedom can instead be controlled and manipulated for another's gain. I can't help but feel that the virtual spaces of the Internet have not decreased reliance on the material, but should make the everyday physical world of our bodies that much more important. On-line communities are powerful places for communication, but they must be related to the material world or they are cast adrift and subject to every virtual wind of emotion or opinion.

Gurak's corporations have the best of both worlds even though she pokes holes in their expertise on the Web. They have a better chance to affect their agenda than does a group of amorphous e-mailers who come together out of anger and disappear off the screen when the short-term problems are solved. The corporation will always have its day, if for no other reason than profit will out. It is up to teachers, and teachers of writing especially, to help students investigate and critique the nature of this world on-line. The Computers and Writing field, an off shoot of Rhetoric and Composition Studies, has given itself the job of researching on-line writing practices. I turn next to a look at this community and the ways it understands teaching with computers.

Educational Technology

I believe that the motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system and that in a few years it will supplant largely, if not

entirely, the use of textbooks.

I should say that on the average we get about two percent efficiency out of schoolbooks as they are written today. The education of the future, as I see it, will be conducted through the medium of the motion picture . . . where it should be possible to obtain one hundred percent efficiency.

—Thomas Edison, 1922 (qtd. in Cuban 9)

When it comes to teaching with technology, only a minority of writing teachers can be classed as either Luddites or technophiles. Most of us are somewhere in between. We know technology can't be ignored, care about teaching, and recognize the potential and the problems for ourselves and our students in the technological writing classroom.

The love affair between computers and writing teachers has paralleled the growth of personal computer use starting in the 1970s. The best places I have found to understand the changes in electronic pedagogy are within the essays and books by and associated with the two pioneers of composition and writing, Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe. In this chapter, I will concentrate on one of their essays which is analogous to the "boy-who-cried-wolf" scenario with which I began this chapter.

Many see technology in academe as a way of using the common language of the computer as a way of breaking down the specialist categories that were erected at the turn of the twentieth century. This non-expert approach reflects the desire to be cross-disciplinary in writing instruction and approach. Crossing disciplinary borders

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to teach writing is certainly a welcome addition to what writing specialists do. But writing instruction had to become a specialty before it was accepted by other academic disciplines. And it could only do this if it taught the majority of students at the university. It is true that writing instruction began by addressing a deficit—students' poor language skills—which often resulted in a course that attended only to the error. Still, writing courses moved traditionally unprepared students into the higher grades and made it possible for them to succeed in college.

A hundred years ago academic specialists (including writing specialists) broke with the elitism of the scholastic educational system and began to teach the surging numbers of students society needed to fill jobs in an accelerating economy. This professional culture provided access to knowledge and the discourse of public forums to Americans who had never had it before. But it also erected boundaries of expertise that fragmented public knowledge and prevented some significant conflicts in the community from ever being addressed collectively (Clark and Halloran 23-4). A paradox of the information revolution is that the computer has assembled these bits of knowledge in one "place"—the Internet.

Often recently, the Internet appears to be the "killer app" when it comes to writing education. The old classroom network software that was expensive to buy and even more expensive to upgrade is now on the Web, where it is password protected and available at any time. The use of the Internet is more significant than previous trends in education because it is so broadly based in society. But history shows that teachers should look with skepticism on any technology that promises too much. Certainly the great Edison was

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wrong, at least about the motion picture replacing textbooks. But it may not be as easy to scoff at those present day Edisons who are putting textbooks on the Web. It certainly is transforming (in Burke's terms) our public discourse about technology and education so that it is almost without comment that we send students to websites as we use to send them to encyclopedias or other reference books.

Early History of Educational Technology

Cuban (1986), a historian of educational technology, claims that one explanation for the early interest in "technology by educators (but not necessarily teachers) [was] this dream of increasing productivity, that is, students acquiring more information with the same or even less teacher effort" (2). As we have seen, this fascination with machine efficiency is an old habit that has gotten more entrenched by being institutionalized.

Cuban stresses that this is not a new phenomenon. Even the lowly "lecture" can be seen as a type of technology, a method to convey information to a group within hearing range of a person's voice, a cousin to the political speech. The lecture structured information so it could be delivered in ways that an audience (of students) could process it in tandem with the other basic nineteenth century media such as the stylus and slate, books, and pictures. These "expand[ed] the sole medium of instruction—teacher talk—into a broader array of visual tools for conveying facts, skills, and values" (3).

There is no question then that everything started, as far as education is concerned, with teacher talk. Technologies have always been supplement to this. Technology in the classroom is often touted as "revolutionary" (Cuban 4), but it is often not the teacher's idea to bring it in the classroom. She knows that the nature of what she does follows from

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her speaking voice and her students' response needs to be keyed to this verbal intervention despite its amplification or modulation by a machine. This is not always easy to do especially when the machine has powerful features that continually hijack critical teaching.

Technology is hyped for what it can do to improve learning in such strongly promotional terms that it seems it needs to be oversold for it to be effective. Free computers to school is one example of over selling. Teachers have rarely been among those who have brought technology into the classroom, instead those outside the classroom are more interested in students learning more efficiently. The economics of education is definitely keyed to this phenomenon. If it were up to the teacher, she would have small classes and intimate dealings with students. She would also provide more personal attention to students instead she is given more students to teach. And one cure for overcrowded classes is to teach them all by distance learning, which sets up a whole new set of pedagogical problems. Can technology promote innovative teaching practice? It is hard to tell, especially if you consider the cycle that technology goes through in its acceptance and/or rejection in the classroom.

The cycle that technological innovation and implementation takes according to Cuban, rides the wave of "exhilaration / scientific-credibility / disappointment / teacher-bashing." The reason for this cycle, he claims, "drew its energy from an unswerving, insistent impulse on the part of non-teachers to change classroom practice" (6). And the main issue, at least for teachers, is that these non-teachers consistently ignored teacher craft.

Teacher "craft" is the accumulated wisdom of teaching that can't be quantified or predicted in any definite way. In other words, teachers when they teach (perform); they are artists. Teachers should get respect for their practitioner knowledge. This "respect can be restored for the notion that stability in teaching practice and the craft of instruction are positive forces in schools, maintaining a delicate balance amidst swiftly changing public expectations" (7). Acknowledgment of teaching skill gets short shrift when the next new technology is introduced into the classroom.

An historical example of such an attempt to supplement the teacher with technology is the case of radio in the 1930s. During that time radio was a national rage that made some want to use it even in the schools.

In his 1932 book, *Radio: The Assistant Teacher*, [Benjamin] Darrow proclaimed, "The central and dominant aim of education by radio is to bring the world to the classroom, to make universally available the services of the finest teachers, the inspiration of the greatest leaders . . . and unfolding world events which through the radio may come as a vibrant and challenging textbook of the air." (19)

This description of radio's potential to "bring the world to the classroom" sounds surprisingly like the hype for the Internet and distance learning today. Of course, distance learning because of its potential for inter-activity is many times more powerful.

The kind of world these technologies bring to the classroom can't be a world that is somehow more available because all experience needs to be transformed into meaning. These technologies don't bring meaning closer, they supply more information more

quickly and with more flash. Meaning making happens in the interaction between teachers and students.

Progressives of the 1920s and 1930s were interested in innovations like the radio, but they knew that innovation was nothing unless it could be put to use. And schools were always one of the first places that these innovators saw to market their technologies. When technology is put between education and capitalism it creates an irresistible force that educators are often unable to ignore. To be at the receiving end of innovation is exhilarating, but it covers over the Faustian bargain schools have made that insures corporate profit at the expense of independent teaching and learning.

The profit mentality with respect to technology in the schools has helped to create the teacher as technician. Once the machines arrive, teachers have to figure out what to do with them and how to keep them running. The intention to de-skill workers has been upper management's plan since the beginnings of the industrial revolution. Cuban says, "Teacher as technician would be a fair description of the role envisioned and carried out in the early decades of television's entry into classrooms (36). Nowadays teachers are often forced to be computer technicians in classrooms. We can hope perhaps that since it won't be so easy to get rid of the computer as it was the radio or the TV in our classes, that the ubiquitous computer will somehow be subsumed into our daily practice, so that we can go back to teaching. In the meantime, what are the prospects for teachers who still want to make teaching and not maintenance of the equipment a priority in their classrooms? I turn next to the computers and writing community within rhetoric and composition studies for some answers.

Computers and Writing

You know that a field has risen to prominence when those working in it write its history. And computers and writing, a sub-discipline of composition studies, needs no other evidence that it has arrived than the Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe (1996) history, *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994: A History* (hereafter referred to as *History*). In chapter four of this book the authors proclaim the moment when intellectual parity was reached: "1989-1991: Coming of Age—The Rise of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives and a Consideration of Difference." This coming of age, not inconsequentially, happened when other academic disciplines started to acknowledge the importance of computers and writing in classrooms and in the workplace. Throughout their history of computers and writing, the authors maintain a parallel between their research agenda and composition studies. The authors indicate that computers and writing studies by 1991 knew where its disciplinary roots were, but it had decided to go in its own unique direction:

During the period 1989 to 1991, many specialists in computers and composition studies were assimilating, and contributing to, composition studies' move toward social and critical pedagogies. Some also found themselves assimilating what might be termed the second Copernican turn (C&W, 1994), the first having been the shift from computer-as-data-processor to the computer-as-word-processor, and the second the shift from the computer as word processor to the computer as global communication device. These two developments—the rise of social and

critical pedagogies and the expansion of what is generally called computer-mediated communication (CMC)—where mutually reinforcing CMC made available virtual spaces, virtual classrooms or on-line parlors where composition teachers could meet with colleagues and students and enact the social construction of knowledge. (184-185)

Even though there were signs of maturity in cross-disciplinary movements during the period 1989-91 that were helped by the explosion of interest in hypertext and hypermedia from a fringe in literary studies, there was also an indication that computers and writing scholars had to constantly remind themselves of the importance of the study of computers and writing.

Hawisher, et al, report a decline in scholarly conference papers, which they say “[i]ndicate that computers were becoming everyone’s business—a seemingly transparent technology” (186). During this time the most interesting sign of maturity appeared when Hawisher and Selfe observed that there was just too much uncritical enthusiasm being generated around teaching with computers. A conference paper delivered at the CCCC by Hawisher “reminded composition teachers, in their enthusiasm for the new media, to remember that they were composition teachers as well as early adapters” (187). More critical responses—one of the real marks of disciplinary power— were needed. Hawisher, et al, saw this critical mood evolving from such things as conference sessions. They read a critical “turn” in the “title of session E:18” that appeared at the 1991 CCCC: ““(A) Freedom, (B) Repression, (C) Anarchy, (D) All of the Above: Hypertext and Ideology”” (188). It is interesting to note that the title of the session is symbolic of the “turn,” while

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none of the paper's titles are given. This seems to imply the tentative nature of their work, but it also means that the young discipline's boundaries have not been laid out as yet so there is still a vibrancy and hopefulness in what they are doing.

This trend toward critical self reflection was seen during the early 1990s when scholars were "active[ly] borrowing critical theories and research perspectives from such diverse disciplines as literary studies, social psychology, and distance education" (192). Some of the rising computers and writing scholars and their works include Mason and Kaye's (1989) *Mindweave*, Poster's (1990) *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*, and Bolter's (1991) *Writing Space*. The journal *Written Communication* in Winter 1991 contained four articles on computer mediated communication (CMC) written "by authors from such diverse fields as linguistics, psychology, technical communication, computer science, business administration, and rhetoric and composition perspectives" (193-4). Handa's (1990) *Computers and Community: Teaching Composition in the Twenty-First Century* appears a bit quaint now that we are in the new century, but all the time, the trope of the twenty-first century was a powerful way of calling attention to yourself and your ideas.

A way of telling where the field was *vis-à-vis* composition studies and English studies, too, was to note the frequency of articles concerning computers and writing published in a journals like *College English*. *College English* published three articles in Dec. 1990 after "a five year silence": Cooper and Selfe's (1990) "Computer Conferences and Learning: Authority, Resistance, and Internally Persuasive Discourse," Slatin's (1990) "Reading Hypertext: Order and Coherence in a New Medium," and Nydahl's (1990)

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"Teaching Word Processors to be CAI Programs." The authors of this history proclaim: "These three pieces, together, provided a snapshot of the field" (195).

The Journal *College Composition and Communication* (CCC) is the premier composition studies journal and to the annoyance of the authors of *History*, it published "fewer articles on computers" during this period. Hawisher and Selfe's "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class" (hereafter referred to as "Rhetoric") was one of two they did publish in 1991, and it happened to be critical of composition and writing teachers. Hawisher, et al., summarize "Rhetoric's" message this way: it "speculated that teachers might unwittingly use electronic conferences to control students and their discourse." (197). This concern for students' rights was also reflected in composition study's debates over academic discourse and social construction, as I have noted in the first chapter of this dissertation.

The final claim presented in the "Coming of Age" chapter of *History* for the importance of computers and writing comes from Hawisher and Selfe's own journal, *Computers and Composition*, which has been instrumental in bringing research in computers and writing to the forefront. They explain that in 1990 "the field was powerful and broad enough to support awards for research writing." Hawisher and Selfe established two annual awards, one for the best dissertation and the other for the best research article that concerned computers and writing. The awards are given out yearly at the Computers and Writing Conference.

The rise in disciplinary status of computers and writing was achieved by establishing a research agenda and moving to become more critical of the types of

teaching computers promote in the composition classroom. My sense is that the field has been emboldened by its connections to business and industry through computer science, but it still feels to be a step-child of composition studies. Many teachers in composition and writing have come to the field (and to composition studies) from English studies, and consequently they acknowledge the importance of critical theory in the work that they do both as researchers and teachers. Critical theory has also been the road to prestige.

I what follows, I will examine the effects of Hawisher and Selfe's evocation of critical theory in "Rhetoric." I want to remind the reader of my foray into critical theory in the first chapter, which was used to bolster my own credibility. But it was also where I provided reasons why theory matters. Briefly, it gives us tools to move around and through contradictions; it gives us ways to make choices even though what we decide is always already ideological. The computers and writing theorists I will talk about next have no less a political agenda. My worry is that their agenda might not be flexible enough to give students the full range of options in an increasingly sophisticated techno-classroom. Technology is a powerful rhetorical force and the various permutations of this force have to be critiqued constantly.

Hawisher and Selfe's essay, "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class," epitomizes the mood of computers and writing researchers in the early 1990s and summarizes the most pressing problems associated with the emerging field. An extended analysis of their essay will be illuminating for contextualizing computers and writing in the wider culture and in the everyday writing classroom.

"Rhetoric of Technology"

In "Rhetoric," Hawisher and Selfe argue that writing instructors must begin to think critically about how to integrate technology into their classrooms. They warn that the almost universal optimism they've seen in the field by writing teachers who use technology is not the whole story. For one thing, technology cannot ameliorate the long-standing inequalities present in most classrooms. And in fact, it can make things worse by appearing to be a cure while papering over these long standing abuses with the glitz and glamour of technology.

Yet, Hawisher and Selfe's article provides a curious lack of practical solutions to the problem. (They conclude the problem is that technology won't be a solution!) In "Rhetoric," Hawisher and Selfe make a comparison between Foucault's panopticon and networked classrooms. They discover that computers provide a structure of discipline that may stymie student learning and warn against this outcome, but they don't have any suggestions for ways to improve computer environments or their propensity to discipline students.

Hawisher and Selfe's article was directed against those computers and writing specialists who appeared to be too optimistic about the classroom uses of computers. The heart of their article consists of three "texts" that they use to criticize other computer and writing teachers' enthusiastic statements about classroom computer use. Hawisher and Selfe culled their information from three sources: 1) journal articles glowing reports of classroom success with computers, 2) surveys filled out by fellow conference members at the 1988 Computers and Writing Conference, and 3) observations of writing teachers who use computers in their classrooms. They use these observations to argue that there are

deleterious effects of CMC in classrooms. But they moderate their criticisms by including themselves as part of the community of computer writing specialists who have championed technology but who now should "wake up to the problems we have let slip by." They appear to be resolved to resist the technology-as-silver-bullet approach to reform of writing classrooms. And they've also learned that if they continue to proclaim the success of technology in the classroom without talking about the downside, without answering their critics, then they will appear to be flunkies of the administration and of the corporation. This outside criticism is not reported in their article nor in their history, except for the instance, when Frank T. Boyle (1993) and authors, Hawisher and Moran (1993) trade barbs. Boyle calls Hawisher and Moran "techno-evangelists," and they reply that he is also "an evangelist, but for a creed not theirs" (*History*, 247). This is not a very useful exchange and leaves the reader wondering if either side has thought through the problems of technology and writing with any precision.

In order to move toward a more complex reading of the controversy between the enthusiasts and Hawisher and Selfe, I would like to add my analysis to the conversation about computers and writing by critiquing a key essay that lays down many of the recent arguments, Hawisher and Selfe's "Rhetoric." I am wondering whether the arguments for computers in the classroom (that Hawisher and Selfe and other make) don't describe what Boyle says is "the open raincoat of a perverted pedagogy" (622)? Or, if writers like Hawisher and Selfe help to expose the workings of the machine—no matter what the pedagogy—then where is the scandal?

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The Terms of an Analysis

In Hawisher and Selfe's "Rhetoric," I am looking for a way to analyze educational technology. I want to break down the historical and ideological relevance of technology in education to examine the benefits and drawbacks of technology for writing instruction. I derive the terms I will use in my analysis from Michael Calvin McGee's essay, "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology" (1980) which is an exploration of the role of discourse in social change. This analysis is an extension Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* and Burke's theory of "transformation" applied by Clark and Halloran in the early part of this chapter. There are particular similarities between McGee, Jameson, and Burke. Burke is more general when he says the line of descent or the grammar of an idea is always implicated in here-and-now rhetorical practices of a group and vice versa. Jameson's *ideologeme*, or "the smallest intelligible unity of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (76), encapsulates this grammatical and rhetorical essence of an idea. McGee makes the action of the grammar and the rhetoric more available to apply when he describes their dual but simultaneous motion with his "ideograph," which is both diachronic (horizontal) and synchronic (vertical) in its movement.

McGee's presentation is clearly a theory parallel to Jameson, but it concentrates on the social/political without reference to either the individual text or any specific mode of production per se. McGee bypasses Jameson's worries that modes of production can be used as either "disturbing synchronic frameworks (91) or

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"purely topological or classificatory operation" as in "whether Milton is to be read within a 'pre-capitalist' or a nascent capitalist context" (93). He ignores modes of production and typology by formulating the "ideograph." The ideograph is a part of a "rhetoric of control" which he says exists outside the semantics and logic of the proposition. McGee's example for this is the term "rule of law," which usually

makes no sense until it is made the subject or predicable of a proposition. If I say 'The rule of law is a primary cultural value in the United States' or 'Charles I was a cruel capricious tyrant,' I have asserted a testable claim that may be criticized with logically coordinated observation. . . . When I say simply 'The rule of law,' however, my utterance cannot qualify logically as a claim. Yet I am conditioned to believe that "liberty" and "property" have an obvious meaning, a behaviorally directive self-evidence. Because I am taught to set such terms apart from my usual vocabulary, words used as agencies of social control may have an intrinsic force—and, if so, I may very well distort the key terms of social conflict, commitment, and control if I think of them as parts of a proposition rather than as basic units of analysis. (428)

McGee is principally interested in the social, in how communities are made and unmade by ideology. He stresses that: "Human beings in collectivity behave and think differently than human beings in isolation" (425). But he wants to combine the Marxian and the symbolist (e.g., Burke, Cassirer, Polanyi) but get rid of the Marxian tendencies toward totalitarianism and the Symbolists' "philosophy of myth," that "denies that 'myth' is a

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synonym for 'lie' and treats it as a falsehood of a peculiarly redemptive nature" (426). He combines what he sees is most useful in both theories, especially those tied to certain questions they ask: "[t]he Marxian asks how the 'givens' of a human environment impinge on the development of political consciousness; the symbolist asks how the human symbol-using, reality-creating potential impinges on material reality, ordering it normatively, "mythically" (426). Both ideology and symbolism can be accommodated by a radical view of the nature of consciousness:

[C]onsciousness . . . is always false, not because we are programmed automatons and not because we have a propensity to structure political perceptions in poetically false "dramas" or "scenarios," but because "truth" in politics, no matter how firmly we believe, is always an illusion. The falsity of an ideology is specifically rhetorical, for the illusion of truth and falsity with regard to normative commitments is the product of persuasion. . . . Further, the political language which manifests ideology seems characterized by slogans, a vocabulary of "ideographs" easily mistaken for the technical terminology of political philosophy. An analysis of ideographic usages in political rhetoric, I believe, reveals interpenetrating systems of "structures" of public motives. Such structures appear to be "diachronic" [phenomenon that changes through time] and "synchronic" [phenomenon occurring at same time] patterns of political consciousness which have the capacity both to control "power" and to influence (if not determine) the shape and texture of each individual's "reality." (427)

This false consciousness is similar to Jameson's notion of the cultural object as mirage: "It articulates its own situation and textualizes it, thereby encouraging and perpetuat[ing] the illusion that the situation itself did not exist before it, that there is nothing but text, that there never was any extra- or con-textual reality before the text itself generated it in the form of a mirage" (81-82). "Cultural object as mirage" also ties into Fish's concept of rhetoric (the epigraph in chapter one) that "fine language" has a tendency to "substitute its own forms for the forms of reality." This substitution constructs Jameson's mirage and is strictly rhetorical and referential (as in a dream) to the material forces lodged in the political unconscious.

The Text

Epistemological issues such as these were connected with problems of pressing sociopolitical importance in Restoration England. A crucial term encoding these concerns was *enthusiasm*. . . . [Late Seventeenth-century] writers . . . used the label "enthusiasm" to condemn those who had claimed the authority of personal inspiration to disrupt the social and religious order. . . . [T]he assertion was made that men who believed themselves inspired had drawn people away from obedience to existing political and religious authorities. —J. V. Golinski ("A Noble Spectacle" 37)

The enthusiasts that J. V. Golinski cites were the advanced guard for those scientists of the British Royal Society of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century who wanted their knowledge to be affirmed by experimentation. Those who considered themselves to be more professional struggled to replicate their experiments. The enthusiasts did not have to worry about this issue because their "science" consisted of

inspiration and rested in the rhetoric of the spectacle. The enthusiasts had to be weaned of their bright toys and pushed to apply themselves to careful experimentation by other members of this burgeoning seventeenth-century scientific community (The Royal Society). The rhetoric of science was beginning to depend on the repeatable experiment to sanction its epistemology which when completed ended up pushing rhetoric into the political unconscious (see Fish's definition of rhetoric). Something like this process has been happening in the computers and writing community over the last decade. This is the latest chapter of the diachronic progress of disciplinary knowledge from the seventeenth century to the present. I wish to examine, therefore, the way this idea plays out synchronically against other ideographs.

I examine Hawisher and Selfe's article to discover, as McGee says, "The truth of symbolist constructs . . . [which] appears to lie in our claim to see a legitimate social reality in a vocabulary of complex, high-order abstractions that refer to and invoke a sense of 'the people'" (435). For the Royal Society the vocabulary was the scientific method which legitimized an ordered, rational universe for the people of the day. Hawisher and Selfe want to install a critical theory (Foucault in this case) to legitimize their field for its community and for the wider community of composition studies. I am not so interested in what they say about Foucault as in what kind of community is persuaded to accept their ideology, and for what purpose. Who are the agents? Because if members of a community know who they are, then they can get in and fight for the theory that works to get their point across. If not it doesn't matter what theory they have because it won't last in a rhetorical stand off between them and the next newest and flashier technology to come down the line.

As a way into discovering the disciplinary knowledge ideograph in "Rhetorics," I submit this sentence from the article's first page, first paragraph of "Rhetoric" for analysis:

Along with becoming acquainted with current composition theory, instructors, for example, must learn to recognize that the use of technology can exacerbate problems characteristic of American classrooms and must continue to seek ways of using technology that equitably support all students in writing classes (55).

There are three ideographs working both diachronically and synchronically in this sentence: composition theory (and knowledge), the instrumentality of educational technology, and phenomenon of classroom problematics (i.e., student difference and resistance). I deal primarily with disciplinary knowledge and technology in the rest of this chapter. In chapter 3 and 4 I look at technology and classroom problematics.

In Hawisher and Selfe's text, the three ideographs are sequential, but they also appear in relation to one another to define the authors' present moment. I can imagine from the grammar of the sentence that if one knows the most recent scholarship in composition, then one should recognize that technology can make traditional teaching practice more problematic, which leads to the problems using technology to facilitate student writing. For instance, problems of teacher control and students' control of their own writing are defined by Hawisher and Selfe in terms of inappropriate or inadequate use of technology. As they see it, the straight line between composition theory and the reform of problematic writing classroom practice is sidetracked by the misappropriation of technology. The misuse of technology that they cite is ideological and "specifically

rhetorical" (McGee 427). It is, according to Hawisher and Selfe, employed by a sub-community—which I refer to as "enthusiasts"—of the computers and composition community.

Hawisher and Selfe introduce those who misuse technology in this way:

In this paper, we examine the enthusiastic discourse that has accompanied the introduction of computers into writing classes and explore how this language may influence both change and the status quo in electronic classrooms. (56)

Hawisher and Selfe are referring here to certain writing teachers'/scholars' use of "enthusiastic discourse" (i.e., a rhetoric of technology) to describe their experiences teaching with technology. The authors include a half page of excerpts from these teachers' journal articles to show their claims for the benefits of technology in the writing classroom. The articles are filled with anecdotes of excited students learning to write with computers. The way Hawisher and Selfe refer to these teachers gives the opening for my synchronic analysis of disciplinary knowledge.

The construction in the second clause above—"this language [enthusiastic discourse] may influence"—makes their writing strangely disembodied. The agents of the discourse are masked again when Hawisher and Selfe give some examples of this enthusiastic discourse. They report and cite (57) these additional examples, but do not respond to individual writers. They reduce them symbolically ("this language") and then generalize about them.

On the surface Hawisher and Selfe seem to be trying not to estrange these people, but rhetorically they are disturbing the agency of the enthusiasts' language

and distributing it between these teachers and the machines they talk about. In the above quotation, the discourse "that accompanied the introduction of computers" can be seen to be generated by the machine itself, or, at least co-generated by the teacher and the machine. I don't think this is the way Hawisher and Selfe mean "rhetorics of technology," but attributing agency to the machine is typical of the reduction of language that occurs when people talk about the discourse of technology (see Doheny-Farina, especially 24).

Hawisher and Selfe don't always give over agency to the machine when talking about the enthusiasts. In the following excerpt, they give a precis of the enthusiasts' claims for technology's classroom uses:

The above comments represent a number of claims about writing instruction and how it can improve in carefully designated electronic settings: students experience different kinds of intellectual "spaces" in which they can learn differently and sometimes more effectively than in more traditional academic forums; instructors can become better acquainted with their students; many of the status cues marking face-to-face discourse are eliminated, thus allowing for more egalitarian discourse, with greater attention to the text at hand. Collaborative activities increase along with a greater sense of community in computer-supported classes.

(58)

This description foregrounds teacher craft in relation to technology and not the other way around. The main agent is the teacher, who uses the computer as tool to teach.

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Thus the enthusiasts' program as delineated above by Hawisher and Selfe defines technology as an impediment between theory and reform of practice—as you might expect from their lead in to their article—and makes technology instrumental and a metonymy of theory in its effect on practice.

It appears that for Hawisher and Selfe, it is not the rhetoric of technology but technology's rhetoric that prevents technology from working effectively in writing classrooms. Hawisher and Selfe imply that the enthusiasts allow technology to construct an ideology by rhetorical means. In effect, they start to believe their own hype. For Hawisher and Selfe, teaching with technology is more complicated, or at the very least, not as pat. They assemble examples of their own that show that technology does not do half the things that the enthusiasts say it does. They conclude:

After comparing these accounts of computer use, described through what we call the "rhetoric of technology," and our observations of electronic writing classes, we discuss how *electronic technology can intensify* those inequitable authority structures common to American education. (emphasis added 56)

Technology appears in this rendition of its application to writing pedagogy to be infected by being fed "through" the anecdotes of the enthusiasts, these teachers who in Hawisher and Selfe's observation appear to be blinded to common classroom problems, in contrast to themselves (who happen to use the same technology) who are able to recognize the truth that technology intensifies classroom problematics. For the enthusiast, technology alleviates certain classroom inequalities, and for Hawisher and Selfe, technology exposes classroom inequalities to new scrutiny.

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The argument that Hawisher and Selfe enact between themselves and the sub-community of enthusiasts can be defined in terms of rival ideologies synchronically arranged but diachronically traceable back at least three hundred years to the rivalry between the Restoration enthusiasts and the Royal Society. Both ideologies are specifically rhetorical. The enthusiasts say technology helps alleviate problems, while Hawisher and Selfe say it exacerbates them. Yet Hawisher and Selfe take pains to assure the other group that they (Hawisher and Selfe) are not placing themselves outside the larger community of writing-technology users that they all belong to. "Our objections lie not in the use of computer technology and on-line conferences but rather in the uncritical enthusiasm that frequently characterizes the reports of those of *us* who advocated and support electronic writing classes" (emphasis added 56). Contrasted here are two sets of texts: the reports of the enthusiasts and the observations of Hawisher and Selfe. Both can be said to constitute conflicting mimeses of on-going writing practice—a practice of symbolist construction of "reality" that exists and is important for a particular community.

The importance of this discussion then is to note the absent voice of the machine which is given agency in the attempt to silence the enthusiasm of certain teachers who are then rehabilitated in the "us" of community by Hawisher and Selfe's own negative examples of machine classroom use. When agency is displaced into the machine it acts within the Jameson's mirage as it is activated by absent agents. Who are these agents? One set resides, as we've seen, in the corporation. Another set are consumers and yet another are the students.

Technology-as-agent operates on a kind of auto-pilot and can be recalled at least symbolically at a moments notice. But there are human rhetorical agents (e.g., corporate salesmen) pulling the puppet strings. Or, at least that is what these absent agents hope they can do. Gurak's Lotus and Clipper examples show that the absent agents were not as clever in manipulating the mirage as they thought. We can depend upon these agents not always understanding the full picture because there is nowhere to stand outside of the mirage-generating world machine. But the beauty with which a particular mirage is constructed is as real as it gets. We are reminded once again of Fish and the power and peril of "fine language." And where do we find security from and access to this language? We find it within community.

Classroom writing communities that use technology exist in an uncomfortable stasis with the corporation, the consumer, and the teacher and his students. Each has a hand in playing out the available ideologies. It is up to the teacher in cooperation with students to make the class aware of the power and the peril of this rhetorical situation called the electronic classroom. In the next chapter, I attempt to do just that when I give my composition class the opportunity to discuss their writing on-line.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ELECTRONIC CLASSROOM: TWO CASE STUDIES

Introduction: Technological Discourse

Reading so many stories and finding teleologies of intention, subject formation, and power erupting thematically at the corners of every text, a rhetoric of intersubjectivity calls into question the stories texts tell about themselves. Here reason sweetly redeems the intersubjective promise made at the entry of the speaking subject into language: every attempt to analyze or to step outside of narrative entangles discourse in narrative structures, which are both the sign and the means for the location of discourse in time.

—Susan Wells (*Sweet Reason* 51)

I wish to extend Hawisher and Selfe's project of becoming critical *and* rhetorical about the texts generated in and about electronic classrooms. Their essay "Rhetoric" is a bridge document between the Computers and Writing enthusiasts of the 1980s and those more critical, like Hawisher and Selfe (and myself), who want to see computer-mediated communication (CMC) take its place in disciplinary practice. Their discourse attends to community matters: they tell the story of their (sub)discipline's progress and its rise to power. Disciplinary maturity, they say, will come when the techno-enthusiasts' texts are seen as fragments in a postmodern theoretical narrative consequent on repetition and

error. It is incumbent on us to focus critically on technology use in the classroom because the implementation of technology in classrooms is progressing at a blinding pace. This new more critical narrative of Hawisher and Selfe's should permit us to slow the technologizing process down by stopping to read what is produced (written) by students and teachers on computers and then critiquing this writing employing theorists like Foucault. In this chapter, I also attempt to slow down the pace with the help of Susan Wells and others.

In her 1996 book, *Sweet Reason*, Susan Wells performs a reading of Plato's *Phaedrus* in which she examines the rhetorical significance of the connection between writer and reader, between desire and reason. She foregrounds her desire as a writer in relation to her reader in these provocative and reason-able words: "Lysias was not really the importunate nonlover, any more than Phaedrus (or, in his turn, Socrates) was: he was a teacher of rhetoric working on a problem, a technician of language, like most of the probable readers of this book" (2). She speaks to teachers of rhetoric in their guise as actors in a real-life drama—the writing classroom in this case. This site is mine as well. It is where problems of language happen to be part of teachers' and students' lives.

Wells is concerned with what she calls the "intersubjective ground" of discourse. Rhetorician Barry Brummett explains the intersubjective this way in his important essay, "Some Implications of 'Process' or 'Intersubjectivity': Postmodern Rhetoric" (1976):

The central tenet of intersubjectivity, or process, is ambiguity: the idea that there is no objective reality (or considerations of one are excluded). . . .

There is no one standard against which to compare experience, yet people

nevertheless do have meaningful experiences and do not generally suffer from any feeling of unreality. Therefore, if reality is not objective, then it must be the case that people make their own reality. This is not to say that I can conjure up whatever reality I like. The sense in which I mean that people make their own reality is that we must *participate* in making reality. . . . To say that people participate in making reality is to say that reality, or what is observed, will be partially determined by the way in which people observe, which is a form of participation. Thus, the world is determined by nature and science jointly. . . . Now, the question is this: If objective reality does not exist, where will people get the reality that we do have? Which is to say, where will we get the meanings that we have? The answer is that people get meanings from other people through communication. (158-159)

Brummett's ideas about intersubjectivity seem very similar to social constructionism, although he also suggests that the construction of the social is not entirely dependent on the social—we are not who we are just because of the group. We constantly bring new material from outside (nature), which we configure by observation (science) to make the meanings we have together. Thus he is very close to Foucault's "contingent and situated" reality as we presented it in chapter two of this dissertation.

Similarly, Wells understands the function of the intersubjective to be the ground where the content of a discussion matters (comes to meaning) only so far as the participants act upon it together. "Whatever the propositional content of the dialogue [the

Phaedrus in this case] it is situated in its discursive relations, the complex relations among writers and readers which support and constrain textuality" (2). She offers an example of these constraints in the way we (moderns) use Plato's *Phaedrus*. She says "We read the *Phaedrus* [it's exemplary here] as a philosophical text, assimilating it to disciplinary conditions that are distinctly modern" (3). And, in a footnote (n 3) she gives the modern context for this reading by citing those who we use to help us do this type of reading. Derrida, Searle, Max Weber, Lyotard, and others. Each argues for a particular reading and a way of reading the texts of modernity. Likewise, Wells is after describing certain texts of modernity "oriented to varied discursive practices" that "includ[e] forms of reason, and their supporting intersubjective relations." She explains that these forms and relations are "deeply sedimented in such institutions as academic disciplines and professions and in practices of language and media" (3). The way they were sedimented is through the working out of reason and desire in language carried along by narration.

I am most interested in student adaptability and resistance to forms of reason and relations between teacher and student within the first year composition (FYC) classroom that uses technology. I believe that these forms are radically modified in networked classrooms. Thus the old sediments are breaking up and new ones are forming.

Because of the way discursive practice sediments reason and relations between the student writer and her teacher, the classroom reflects its disciplinarity in layered formations. We would not want to choose one discursive practice over the other in these formations nor do we often have that freedom. Those with a facility for the language mostly control the rhetorical uses disciplinary texts are put to. Wells implies that there are

many different ways of constructing a disciplines' content and practice. Referring to Derrida's idea of the infinite iterability of the text, she says: we don't have control of how our disciplinary language disseminates meaning because our texts "act for us at a distance." Technology in the classroom can act as the tool for this dissemination at a distance except that forms of reason wish to restrain its tendency toward chaos and breakdown. The intersubjective infused by desire continually breaks open the boundaries of technology even as these same technologies move toward entropy, noise, and dysfunction.

Wells helps me see the ground where technology brings us momentarily out of order into chaos and back to order. She helps me imagine this process theoretically by drawing a continuum between Habermas's "public sphere" and Lacan's "real." In *Sweet Reason* she describes the way she sees us moving between these polarities:

Sometimes we aspire to the rationality of a public sphere in which all speakers are equal [Habermas]. . . . Sometimes we search abjectly for lost rationality, imagined as lost [Lacan]. Such complex relations require a new rhetoric, and theorists from Burke to Perelman to de Man have worked at constructing one.

(3)

What Habermas lacks in practicality, Lacan makes up for in symbolic associations. Of course, it isn't that simple; the rational outweighs the indeterminate objects of desire, especially in the context of any scholarly book, and *Sweet Reason* is no different. By using Habermas and Lacan, Wells describes a continuum: the theoretical ground where the material dances with the symbolic. This dance of opposites can be extended when we use technology in the writing classroom.

Technology, for all its instrumentalism, does let individuals construct desire differently and at a faster rate and duration. But what of this new rhetoric Wells speaks about? It has its emanation in the computer screen. With the Internet we do not just turn on the computer to do things. Now there are people inside the machine. People who exert force to sediment even these virtual worlds. They still need to learn to read differently. But the technology provides new avenues for the use of rational forms within intersubjective relations as they proliferate on-line. The speed at which these relations are formed (and disappear) have an effect on discursive practice and the way e-texts are written. The movement toward sedimentation remains, but on-line discourses are harder to read because they are so fluid and fragmented. This puts pressure on the writer/reader because in the old economy one could do a close reading of these discourses (usually found in books) and be confident they would be there tomorrow to refer to in our seminars. Now on-line discourses are more transitory and layered like one of those multidimensional chessboards (hypertext). What is put into play changes and shifts constantly. On the positive side, chaos rains equally on all the players irrespective of ideology or intent. Students in a technology-saturated writing classroom have an opportunity to participate as equals in a modernist e-rhetoric that is configuring discursive landscapes. In fact, they have a head start on their teachers; they have since birth been a part of this new culture. It is up to teachers in such classrooms to help them mediate the blur of new forms of rationality, so that humane environments can be constructed. I believe, along with Susan Wells, that a rhetoric of intersubjectivity provides such a way.

Wells's book is an example of such an attempt to describe a (modernist) intersubjective rhetoric. This rhetoric is defined as participating with others in the art of invention, arranging, and delivering language for the purpose of evoking action upon the part of an audience (Johnson 21-22). She explains it this way:

The rhetoric of modernity [intersubjectivity] begins with an analysis of language because language, including both the material level of the signifier and the illocutionary level at which speakers enact their relations, carries the dual inscription of the discourse as a performance of rationality and an enactment of desire. The text is understood as written: it is an object of labor, articulated over time, subject to both writerly revision and readerly interpretation. (141)

And I see this dissertation extending the examination of the electronic text, written upon the screen, speeded up, and instantly revisable by writer and reader. Other connections to other theorists help elaborate this work.

Wells wants to extend Burke's close reading of "the relation between trope and persuasion, between language as a material, bodily practice and as an articulated system of reason." I examine a similar notion (McGee's *ideograph*) when it comes to historical processes in the last chapter. Wells's project is "to extend this work of reading [Burke's and others'] to the discourses of modernity, to the texts of the sciences, the professions, of government and the academy. Modernity is a system of texts that we are only now learning to read" (3).

An example of such systems of texts that have gone on-line is presented by Lester Faigley in his book, *Fragments of Rationality*. I explore his chapter on networked classrooms in order to see my own teaching in networked classroom more clearly.

Networked Classroom

Two current perceptions of the effects of on-line technology dominate the literature: those who think technological advances portend dire circumstances (Rifkin 1995, Stoll 1995, Doheny-Farina 1996), and those who think these advances have brought us to the verge of an actual utopia (Negroponte 1995, Gates, Myhnold, and Rinearson 1995). A third response to the effects of on-line technologies is shown by Faigley (1992) who wants to chart a path between the hazards of technology toward its promise. Faigley sees the potential in on-line communication, yet he is not naïve about the dangers.

Faigley writes about two networked college composition courses he taught during the late 1980s. He is concerned with the ways students come together to compose texts on computers. He attempts to carry on a class discussion in these two classes. I am interested in his account because he usefully theorizes about on-line groups and the communities they constitute. And, he gives me a way to begin to talk about my own classroom, and the students I observe and the ways these classrooms are being constructed within and by the network. I discuss my own networked classroom and a laptop classroom later in the case studies in this chapter.

Faigley uses postmodern theory—specifically theorists like Jameson, Lyotard, and Baudrillard—to situate his on-line writing class. Briefly, he says: “Postmodern theory decisively rejects the primacy of consciousness and instead has consciousness originating

in language, thus arguing that the subject is an effect rather than a cause of discourse." (9) Yet, this does not discount, he says, the material effects language has, especially, in socio-political terms, in his classroom. One prominent difference between his classroom and mine is the kind of students he has in his classroom in the University of Texas, Austin. They are multiracial and come from diverse economic backgrounds. Differences and conflicts seem to be closer to the surface for his students than for any group of students I have been able to study in the upper midwest.

Much recent work in composition, according to Faigley, attempts to "find space for political agency, a term for both teacher and student authority in light of postmodern theory." This effort to think in political terms remains extremely difficult because of postmodern theory's strong resistance to "grand narratives." Postmodern theory offers an ongoing critique of the truth claims of discourses that 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. For these absences postmodern theory has been often attacked, especially by Marxists and feminists who hold that any attempt to end domination requires a theory of positive social action. (20)

The networked classroom, according to Faigley, does not simulate a *de facto* political atmosphere. He wishes to politicize his network class, but he does have hopes that it might be politicized. He introduces the analysis of his class discussions with this chapter title: "The Achieved Utopia of the Networked Classroom." We learn quickly that this so-called on-line utopia has not been achieved, only that he performs a test case, positions his

class within an example of the current utopian networked classroom to see if there *is* a functioning community inside the network.

He begins by asking this question: "[I]f we have indeed entered the era of postmodernity, then why has there been so little change evident in the classroom conditions for teaching college writing?" He concludes that the methods of teaching writing (since the 19th century) have not changed but the contexts have. Faigley explains the context for the modern networked classroom this way:

It has only been since the advent of hypertext, which exists only on a computer, and programs that allow written discussions, enabling all students in a class to 'talk' at the same time, that previously unimagined impacts of computers for writing have come to be appreciated. (165)

This "talk" at any time will be an important element of the listserv discussion I explore below. It is the one critical feature in extending critical thinking into teaching on-line because it disturbs the sedimented ideas of students. I will have much more to say about this when I examine my students classroom listserv experience.

Faigley hypothesizes that network technologies help teachers construct the student subject. His project involves using the network technology in classrooms, allowing the traditional power hierarchy to collapse, then he observes whether this attempt at a student-centered class lasts "at least during the duration of a[n on-line] class discussion" (167). A modest hope, indeed. On-line class duration functions to allow community to occur but only temporarily. It provides a place of agency within a fragmented structure which by definition breaks apart in the next moment. Agency for Faigley's class continued across

the on-line discussion session but doesn't get a chance to solidify into truth claims that bind and confront those involved in the work of community.

The issue of duration and the fragility of truth claims are important matters in the classroom listserv I conduct in my first-year composition class. The texts I impose by giving my students an assignment instead of merely letting them write about whatever they wished extended the time of the face-to-face classroom. It also gave students productive work to do and resulted in numerous interrelated, but still fragmented texts, while Faigley's class discussion, because he refused to intervene, veered toward flaming.

Nevertheless, these texts Faigley and I have our students write on-line are examples of Wells's "texts of modernity" and are useful for different reasons. His on-line discussion demonstrates the difficulty in establishing political agency in a networked classroom. My listserv extends the classroom practice of reading texts critically and writing in response to this type of reading to the on-line writing environment.

In the next section, I read two different "texts": first, a classroom listserv transcript, an e-text produced by my Composition I class; and second, student responses to corporate, educational rhetoric within a laptop writing classroom. Both are examples of a rhetoric of intersubjectivity. In my first reading, I illustrate the rhetorical effects of Susan Wells's terms *language* and *narration* in the e-class transcript. In the latter, I explore actions precipitated by student resistance—another version of intersubjective rhetoric.

Case Studies

This chapter presents two writing classroom case studies. In the first study I take the Composition I class I taught in Fall 1997 and study the transcript of a fifty minute e-class discussion held on a classroom listserv. The other case study concerns observations made while visiting an all laptop university campus where I sat in on several first year writing classes. The first case study concentrates on the use of an on-line synchronous discussion and how such discussions can change the tenor and shape of the ideas students have about their writing. The second case study investigates the nature of student resistance manifested in classrooms where students are obligated to use laptop computers. Both case studies involve student writing, but not the writing directly sponsored by the class structure or by the teacher, or if so, it is generated as a supplement to the writing generally used to figure the grade for the class. In both cases, I study what I call "writing otherwise" to see of what effect it has on teaching writing in a classroom described as a community of writers.

One aspect of classrooms where teachers employ computer-mediated communication (CMC) is that students produce much more writing than ordinary face-to-face classrooms. However, this type of writing has the feel of speech in that it is not thought out as much as even first draft writing. E-mail writing is a kind of quasi-writing, written speech, an artifact of the moment. As computer networks get more sophisticated, perhaps e-mail as writing done "otherwise" will be replaced by more oral messaging. But at the moment, e-mail can produce new texts about writing by those who are learning to write better, finished essays and for those teachers who want to study such student

writing. Such writing can be focused on discussing the writing itself or it may be about other things that are not directly sponsored by classroom assignments. I want to propose a rhetoric for this e-mail writing that imagines its usefulness for students within the writing classroom community.

I want to test the hypothesis that on-line classrooms are social spaces where writing builds community within virtual on-line spaces. These communities are necessarily short lived. Students only appear a semester at a time in classrooms and then disappear, to be replaced by a whole new group. In so-called virtual on-line writing communities, this transitory characteristic is complicated even more by the lack of the physical. The physical space in which the writing occurs has always been outside the discursive. Yet it has always been there to help fix the bond between communicants. In the networked classroom, the physical is figured differently, which puts more pressure on the discursive. Thus I analyze the transcript of the listserv and the students' responses to my queries concerning what it means to do writing on laptop computers.

Case Study #1: The Classroom Listserv

Technology and Critical Practice in the Writing Class

Temporary Spaces

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, writing teachers who have embraced computer-mediated communication (CMC) based in networked classrooms have been accused of not being critical of these technologies. The previous chapter outlines the argument of two of these critics, Hawisher and Selfe, who happen to be in the Computers and Writing community. In a recent *College English* article, "Teaching Writing in a

Culture of Technology" (1999), David Anson states that CMC has not "increase[d] the social nature of communication," although, he adds: "there is no doubt that the physical isolation of each individual from the others creates an entirely different order of interaction" (269). Anson leaves it to others to discern the nature of this new order of interaction. This is exactly the site I want to investigate in this chapter. I will argue that instead of isolating students, CMC may allow them to establish environments where productive writing and thinking go on, where group norms are established and evaluated, and where many more kinds of students learn to enter the classroom conversation. I want to show a way CMC can build a new type of community in the way it produces new, heterogeneous orders of interaction.

The possibility that a listserv is a tool to help create these different orders of interaction in a writing classroom is the subject of what follows. The listserv promotes a different sort of student writing within the possible classroom community, that space where the centripetal forces of the class as a whole are matched by the centrifugal forces of individual students and teacher. There are three ways a writing class listserv can function: 1) to form a bridge between the oral classroom discussion and the written assignment, 2) as a pre-draft type of writing submitted before final teacher evaluation, as writing about writing, and, 3) as an a-pedagogical sphere where a different sort of class culture appears. I propose, in addition, that the listserv can be part of a pedagogy that teaches students to construct temporary spaces that allow differences to exist within community—a community established for the exact purpose of assisting student writers. I interrogate the text(s) of one particular classroom

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listserv discussion to see the possible ways of conceiving such an electronic classroom community.

The E-Class

During Fall semester, 1997, I initiated a classroom listserv in my Composition I class at the University of North Dakota. For most of the semester the discussion on the list was half hearted at best. My frustration with this response led me to try something new. I decided to hold a full class on-line, an e-class, where students would be involved in a synchronous, real-time discussion. I felt like a technician fiddling with the machine of the classroom, trying to get the words out, tired of my own voice, and tired of the same old sounds from students who had never thought before about the ideas they were spouting. Yes, I wanted them to sound more like me. I thought of the e-class as an antidote for the same old frustration teachers like me feel with facile student opinion. In other words, I was face to face with student resistance and wanted for once to engage it instead of merely ignoring it.

In class the students had been involved in a rather acrimonious debate that flowed around the fourth writing assignment in the course. Because of this tension which seemed to be getting us nowhere, I had been thinking about community building in the writing classroom. I imagined the reason for the tensions in class as a problem of community—we were not getting along. At that time, consensus defined community for me. I thought that a “community of writers” made up of individuals working together to help one another read the texts of the class and write the course assignments could, if they agreed on a method, effectively help each other learn to write better essays. I wanted students in

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my writing class to produce a certain kind of writing that they could use to disturb their conservative, middle-class biases, especially when it came to writing about themselves in relation to something like radical feminism. I wanted them to see the effects their ideas might have on a community they helped create to deal with their teacher's insistence that they engage this material. What was at the bottom of it? I hoped they would have an experience of another point of view at least for the span of time they were in my class. And as far as the listserv was concerned, I believed it would permit them this engagement by the way it extended agency to more members of the class.

The listserv began to extend agency when it gave a different set of students the opportunity to speak on the listserv discussion, thus placing more ideas into the open. It is typical of students in the upper midwest to be reluctant to talk in class. And the most vocal are usually men. The listserv was able to draw out those too shy to speak up in class and more women class members. It also reduced the possibility that I would be the most important agent in the classroom. And this was one of the reasons for doing the listserv: I was mindful that my control (simply as teacher) over the face-to-face discussion was part of the limits of a typical classroom discussion. I couldn't do too much about that even if I had wanted to. We were reading texts I had chosen and were doing assignments I had written, so the face-to-face discussions centered around ideas I had introduced. But I could allow a bit of uncertainty into the class by letting them write to each other in the particular freedom of the listserv.

There seemed to be no way to predict what would happen within the temporal space of the listserv. And it was up to us—the whole class—to imagine changes that

might come about as a result of the on-line discussion when we moved back to the physical classroom.

Adrienne Rich's Re-vision

At the time of the e-class, students had written three papers plus two versions of a fourth paper. The textbook we were using, Bartholomae and Petrosky's *Ways of Reading*, encouraged sequenced assignments where students were asked to write papers connecting ideas from previous readings. My immediate goal for the e-class was to have students discuss the ways they might write a paper that connected ideas from two earlier drafts to produce a third paper which reflected on and extended the first two.

Briefly, in the first draft I asked students to write on how John Berger ("Ways of Seeing") and Adrienne Rich ("Re-vision") talk about art and poetry as political acts presented within a "public sphere" (Habermas 1962, Wells 1996). The second draft, which they had just finished at the time of the e-class, took the notion of the public sphere and applied it to "any personal/political place" of their own. In other words, students were to use Adrienne Rich's idea of "writing as re-vision," to re-vision a site of personal crisis through writing and re-writing as Rich re-visions her past through her poetry. In this way they would make these texts articulate moments in their lives.

In her essay, Rich looks at poems from three periods of her life to see the way her poetry reflected her life lived as a renewing, re-visioning process. I had hoped to simulate this same process in the writing my students would do for this assignment. In past semesters after students read Rich's essay, I asked them to analyze its method to see if it could be applied to their writing and to their lives.

As you might imagine, this essay with its feminist/lesbian subtext stirred heated debate in my classroom of mostly white Scandinavia-stock men and women. Usually the women, but not always, were able to give Rich the benefit of the doubt upon finding out she is a lesbian, the men mostly would not. And, almost no one could understand why she had left her family to make a more creative life for herself. These responses were fairly predictable and intransigent, and became the reason why most instructors I knew refused to teach the essay. On the other hand, I preferred to teach Rich's essay and would loudly highlight her lifestyle, so no barrier to understanding her essay would go unspoken. I would barrel through the facts of her life, acknowledging them fully but then quickly move on to how students might respond and use her theories. Yet Rich's biography did seem to significantly influence the reception her methods received from my students. Students' received cultural biases against feminism and homosexuality stood in the way of their response to what I considered important—Rich's model of writing as re-vision. I struggled to break us out of this vice of interpretation my classroom found itself in. The listserv provided one way to do this.

I hoped my students' responses on the listserv would, instead of ignoring the dynamic of resistance to my agenda, permit me to incorporate both agreement and resistance into the discussion and into my students' papers. In this way, I wanted students to discuss the nature of their own first responses to Rich and how class might change their impressions by working with their own life crisis. I did foreground the inevitability of some sort of change; they would change if they wrote as I instructed. Did I privilege a certain type of change by setting up the discussion on-line as I did? Probably. But it didn't seem to matter, or only

mattered as far as any other idea that happened to appear and receive momentary attention in the stream of ideas that flowed through the listserv discussion.

I did imagine that the act of writing would change students' perceptions of themselves, and therefore do what Rich says her writing does—backgrounds the writer's biography by allowing the readers, the (student) readers/writers in this case, to substitute their lives for hers. This could happen, I thought, because the topic of the paper was not Rich after all, it was the students' own experience filtered through Rich's method. What I really wanted my students to do was to take a risk, the risk embedded in Rich's method, which meant going beyond mere method or theory to the specter of a changed life. Crossing over and actually embodying that imaginary would be reserved for another time and place. I believe, however, that the specter of change appears quite prominently in the transcript of the listserv discussion, which I will in the rest of this section move toward reading rhetorically. Before I give you my re-constructed and narrativized version of the transcript of the listserv discussion, I want to describe the experience one has on a synchronous e-mail discussion.

Synchronous E-Discussion

The listserv's chaotic synchronous structure is uncanny, especially in the way it forestalls a specific reply to any particular message, thus isolating each speaker's statement and/or response. To show what I mean, imagine there are four people involved in the initial postings to a list. Person D might log on a bit late to find an initial message by A, as well as replies to A's message from B and C, plus a reply to C's message by A. D now has four options: 1) reply to A's original message, 2) reply to B, 3) reply to C, or

4) reply to A's reply to C's message. Whichever reply D manages, it will fall amid the gathering stream of all the other possible replies by those others, including more replies by A, B, & C, who are logged onto the list at that time. A shaky coherence is maintained if everyone remembers to keep the subject lines straight.

The phenomenon of having replies fall in line but out of place (in a conversational sense) inserts "noise" into the system. This noise was the first hint the listserv might be disturbing the natural flow of the class's usual face-to-face discussion. It affects the nature of the "talk" produced and consequently the nature of the classroom community we were establishing.

The significance of this noise may be to reduce the normal social clues of the classroom, so those who are reluctant to participate in a typical face-to-face classroom discussion will more readily join a listserv discussion. Those who are shy are not penalized on the listserv. My students' natural reticence to talk in classroom discussions always gives the impression they lack ideas. The problem is you never know how many students have ideas in a discussion because not every student participates. The few who do speak up, continue to speak up throughout the semester

Reading messages on a listserv is, for instance, different from reading messages in an asynchronous chat room (Faigley). Those subscribing to a listserv usually follow the subject lines of the messages that are flowing into their "in" box, choose to click-on these messages, read them, and then reply to them. As you can imagine, class members had various expertises in the e-mail interface. I did not require them to post a certain number of messages, nor could I determine their interest in replying at all. Individual proficiency

with the interface might then relate to how often someone would post messages to the listserv.

In the heat of the e-discussion, it became a problem determining which messages were replying to what thread because students were lax in conserving the subject lines. Another problem with reading the message texts was that students did not remove the other texts appended to their own. Many very short messages were attached to some very long reply sequences. One could determine which was a reply and which the message by observing the series of arrow signs (>>), but I was never sure whether students knew what these signs meant as they furiously read and replied. This was our first such virtual class, and it was hard to know how able they were at the technical aspects of e-mail. I don't think it matters for the outcome. As you can see from the following transcript, there were more than enough people replying throughout the hour to have a substantive discussion.

I began the listserv discussion with an initial post, then students started to send their own messages, and by the end of the hour there were nearly 80 messages posted. As I remember, there was a manic feeling on the list as messages piled in and replies shot out. There was also a sense of playfulness that broke out as we attempted to keep up with the flying messages.

Of the 16 students who participated in the e-class, 13 posted more than once, 4 posted five or more times, and the most anyone posted was 9 times. There were at least 13 different threads—that is, 13 of the 16 students commented once on my initial post. Also, some threads developed into two or three sub-threads. I was amazed and pleased. A discussion between 16 students (and their teacher), where at least 13 students made two

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or more comments was unheard of in one of my composition classes. The discussion I wanted students to have on the listserv that day had to do with helping one (anonymous) student in the class deal with connecting ideas from previous papers. This particular assignment was one of a regime of assignments that formed a sequence.

The Assignment—One in a Sequence

I came up with the idea that students could do a series of linked drafts for the fourth paper after I had assigned the first draft. In effect, I revised my assignment sequence in mid-assigning. At first I had wanted them to merely look at a crisis relationship and how it changed over time in the same way Rich looked back on her poetry. The problem was that my students didn't have a series of texts to analyze that represented their take on a particular personal crisis situation. Rich's method could only be focused on the development of a crisis seen retrospectively. Their memories could not be available as text as Rich's poetry functioned in her essay. When I received their second drafts I realized they were struggling to recognize their crisis as moments they could see differently. That's when I proposed the third reflexive essay which focused on several discrete moments captured in the first two drafts separated by days, instead of Rich's decade long crisis compressed into exemplary poetry. This third paper became the subject of the listserv discussion.

The listserv discussion occurred right before they were to write the third draft assignment. I wanted them to see how their ideas had changed over the short amount of time they had spent writing these papers and, while they were at it, to see what difference our class discussion, my comments on their papers, and the very process of doing the

listserv discussion affected their writing. I wanted them to write about their experience of re-vision which was itself a revision of the previous two papers. So instead of coming to class that morning, I told my students to find a computer—either at home or in one of the labs on campus—and log onto the listserv for our 50 minute class period.

E-Class Set-Up

I began the e-class with this initial posting:

>Dear Complisters: I've posted two short passages written by the same student, one from the first draft (4.1) and one from the second (4.2). Let's discuss how these two selections can be talked about together. I hope this will give you a way to see ways writing affects changes in your ideas; how you might show the re-visioning of your ideas over the time we have spent reading, e-mailing, and discussing Rich; and, how your ideas have changed while you have been writing about your crisis/conflict. Here are two selections from Anne's papers:

>From Ann's first draft paper (4.1):

Both authors state their arguments to be "political issues." Berger "the only reason why" the art of the past is "lost" is because we as people have been cut off from our past through the concept of reproduction. Rich says the political issue is that the "creative energy of patriarchy is fast running out." As women struggle for power, men struggle for women's approval. Neither sex can be completely pleased. Men write for men and women

write for men, so Rich feels women are being left out in the modernization of society. She seems to blame men, but I think the reason we are out of control is because of the views society forces on us, not the ideas and views of men.

>From Ann's second draft (4.2):

In the present, I am able to see that trying to make people see everything the way I do, is not the right way to grow closer to someone through a friendship or relationship. Now, I would not ask someone I care about to change the way they are to please me, I would now be more likely to alter myself to adapt to the way they see things, whether or not I agree with it. Because of the fact that this all went unresolved for so long, it sometimes seems that I am still fighting with H., even though we haven't talked for more than two years. When I was going through all this turmoil with my friend, all I would ever do was complain. I would sit and tell my mom how bad she was and how much I hated being around her, yet I felt this feeling that it was up to me to change H. and make her a better person, or at least more like me.

The first thing I noticed when my students started posting to the listserv was that they didn't take the opportunity to reprise their gender bashing opinions. In a previous face-to-face discussion, one male student had used the Rush Limbaugh epithet, "femi-nazi" to describe women like Rich. While some of the women reacted sharply to this,

most of the male students and a few other female students encouraged him. It was a different story in the e-class: the women led the discussion while the men on the whole were left to reply and ask questions. My guess is that the movement and nature of the messages in the e-class produced this turnabout. My students seem to use the listserv CMC to create a temporary community where a discourse on the individual's rights and responsibilities to themselves and to others predominated.

Partial Transcript of the E-Class Discussions

The transcript below begins with the first dozen consecutive posts as they appear on the listserv. Then after these twelve, I've edited the transcript, so it contains all the messages in the four most prominent threads: 3, 4, 10, & 11 in consecutive order. I painstakingly read these messages to make sure they fit within these threads. The problem I mentioned earlier of dropped subject lines did not make this an easy task. I have not altered the spelling, punctuation, grammar, or syntax of my students' posts. I have added missing letters and words (set in brackets]) when I could guess them with some accuracy. The first number before the names corresponds to the numbered thread while the second number indicates where the message falls in the consecutive list of the eighty messages posted (e.g., #11.25 indicates the 11th thread and the 25th message posted to the listserv). The transcript can be read in several ways: straight through or by numbered thread. I begin the transcript below after most of my students had introduced themselves. Tonia (#2.2) is the exception. She had yet to post her first introductory message. Kim begins the discussion:

1.1-Kim> Dear Anne, In 4.1, you talk about society's views and how they are forced upon us. Then in 4.2, you talk about how you once did the same thing and forced your views on H. Go with that.

2.2-Tonia> Good morning!

3.3-Pete> Why must we try to connect every reading we do with previous readings?

4.4-Molly> I think in the way that Ann said neither women or men could be pleased in society, that is how she felt when she had to deal with her friend. In both situations, someone (Ann or women) were trying to change something that wasn't really theirs to change in the first place.

5.5-Mandy> I think that the two articles both talk about trying to get another person to understand how they feel. Anne was trying to get her friend to relate with her and her opinions and both men and women are trying to get the opposite sex to relate with them.

3.6-Kim>Pete> Because this class is centered around REVISION and the only way to do that is to connect things. Maybe that's the concept of gaining knowledge through writing.

4.7-Tonia>Molly> ok . . . so how is Ann going to write 4.3? Is she suppose to combine 4.1 and 4.2 or is she suppose to write a whole new paper that has quotations from 4.1 and 4.2?

6.8-Tammy> When the author of this exert says "men write for men . . . women write for men . . ." "Maybe she could put herself into the

situation.

4.9-Kim>Molly> that's what I was trying to say.

4.10-Chuck>Molly> If it isn't theirs to change, than whos is it?

5.11-Tammy>Mandy> I agree with Mandy that the two articles talk about trying to get another person to understand how they feel.

4.12-Kim>Tonia>Molly> I think we're supposed to write a whole new paper talking about 4.1, 4.2 and re-vision.

In these first exchanges, Kim and Molly take on both the roles of explaining the paper and interpreting what Anne has to say. Tonia and Chuck ask questions that begin to shift the discussion into what will be its two dominant themes—asking how to do the paper and responding to Ann. Thread #3 is an example of students trying to get information on the basic process of writing the paper I had given them to do. Thread #4 is what I call the “selfish behavior” thread. Messages deal with the conclusion from a discussion of Ann’s dilemma, that one should take care of oneself before trying to change others. Threads #10 and #11, on the other hand, deal with more meta-cognitive issues associated with providing advice to Ann so she might connect her two excerpts. One other point is important to note: Both Kim and Molly had always been fairly accomplished at the listserv technology, which partially accounts for their prominent place in the e-class listserv discussion.

Here then is the rest of the edited transcript of the e-class listserv discussion that presents the four principle threads I mention above:

- 4.13-anon>Chuck>Molly> It isn't for anyone to change.
- 3.14-Bill>Pete> Good question Pete: My answer is that we do it all the time—connect dissimilar things. We just have to open our eyes and turn around and we've already "seen" so much. To say anything about this confusion takes deciding what the connections are. From that knowledge is made; we live, grow, are bored, love, etc etc etc. So why not put a bit of method into it and see how it can be done—make these connections make sense—whatever sense makes sense to us, that is.
- 3.15-Molly>Tonia>Molly> Good question . . . nobody knows.
- 4.21-Molly>Chuck>Molly> I think it up to everyone to worry about themselves, not other people, maybe that is what Ann is thinking...
- 3.22-Bill>Tonia>Molly> Tonia, I think she'll have to write a whole new paper because she'll be talking about the movement through Rich "carrying" her own ideas. These ideas will be somehow influenced by Rich, the email and the discussions, including this one.
- 10.24-Clark> Ann finishes her last [first?] paragraph with the idea of how society is forcing views upon us. She blames society, so it must be wrong to force views on people, and I believe it is. The second paragraph is about how Ann would not try to change the way H. is. I think since Ann sees forcing views on people is bad, she does not want to become a person who does so. She would rather let H. be as H. would be.

11.25-David> I think the second paragraph shows the very act or RE-Vision. It seems to me that Ann has gotten a new perspective, just from sitting back and examining her thoughts. In the first paragraph, she seems more close minded and hostile, but she has changed in the second one, becoming more sensitive and aware of the other person's side of the story.

3.27-Tonia>Bill>Tonia> oh ok :)

3.28-Mandy>Bill>Tonia> OK——so what about 4.2? Did I write that paper for no reason?

3.31-Tammy>Mandy>Bill>Tonia> Yeah? What are we supposed to do with our crisis situation?

4.32-Ron>Molly>Chuck>Molly> ah, but i beg to differ. it is theirs to change. isn't this why we have certain lobbyist groups. how our society is run is based on the law makers. someone needs to give them a different perspective to look at otherwise there would be no progress for women or minorities. it is all of our duties to try to change people or ideas that we think are wrong.

3.33-Tonia>Mandy>Bill>Tonia> "No" you are suppose to use it as a reference for 4.3 . . . I think.

11.36-Kim>David> Adding to David's idea, maybe add [Ann?] could relate this "revision" of hers to Rich's revision of her self. How she went from the "I" to the "us" or "we". That would be a topic Ann could bring up

in her paper about revision (4.3).

3.37-Pete>Bill>Pete> Bill (or anyone that can help), I still do not understand why everything must be connected. Some of the things we are asked to connect seem so different. It would be easier to connect Jesus and Marylon Manson.

3.39-Tammy> I still don't understand how??????

4.40-David>Molly>Chuck> That's all we need in this world, more self centered, self promoting people going around doing things without regard to other people's feelings or to the consequences.

3.46-Tammy>Pete>Bill>Niel> HA HA.

10.47-Ron>Clark> This is a good point, although I wonder where the fine line is between forcing a view and offering a point of view with some information to back it up. After all, every reading we've done in this class is someones point of view and I rarely feel that it is forced upon me, although I do admit that somethimes I do. I feel that it is more important to listen to the opposition of your view and explain it tha[n]t to just say, Thats the way it is and if you dont think so than your wrong!

4.50-anon₁>Ron>Molly>Chuck>Molly> You can't change anyone unless they are willing to change and most people have indiviuality and an opinion so they won't want to be totally what you want them to be!

10.51-Molly>Clark> I agree with you Clark, It might not be standing up for yourself, but is it really worth the effort to try to change other people (H. or men or society) to mold them to your expectations? I think if they are that bad in the first place they are people I wouldn't to be around anyway.

4.54-anon₂>Ron>Molly>Chuck>Molly> I think Ron made a good point, I guess that I had forgotten that some times you have to strongly present your ideas to others. If you do a good enough job supporting it then they will be able to apply it to what they believe, I suppose in a sort of compromise.

3.55-anon>Tonia>Mandy>Bill>Tonia> I think 4.3 is supposed to be what we have learned and if we have changed since we first read Rich. I don't understand why we call it 4.3 though since it isn't a final draft to any of the papers.

11.57-Chuck>Kim>David> Didn't Rich go from the "we" and "us" to the "I"? I could be wrong. Its been a while since I read it.

4.58-Molly>David>Molly>Chuck>Molly> Thats ridiculous, I dont think people should be self centered, they should just try not to change the world all by themselves. I think Ann had so much feeling for H. that she allowed her to go and grow on her own instead of trying to corrupt her and mold her into a clone of herself. everyone has to learn to be themselves.

11.62-Kim>Chuck>Jule>David> Chuck, in her essay, Rich spoke as the
 "I". In the vi[d]eo she spoke more from the "we."

3.64-Mandy>Pete>Bill>Pete> I agree with Bill [sic] in that its hard to
 connect some of 4.1-4.3. I'm having trouble with that. I think since
 thing really sticks out at me I'm going to try to find SOMETHING
 that relates (even if it's really little) and then (try to) expand on that . .
 .Uh. I think.

11.65-Tammy>Kim>Chuck>Jule>David> Good point Kim.

10.77-anon>Clark> Facing these people can be very irritating, but the
 satisfaction that you receive when they finally see how naive they were
 is well worth it. If you have a point of view worth fighting for, dont
 back down and try to help out these poor naive souls see it.

10.80-Mandy>Clark> I also agree with Clark also. but I think that it is
 very improtant to stand up for yourself, and it is worth trying to change
 other people. they may not change, but you can atleast try. That is
 basically what we are doing right now, listening to each other and
 trying to change others views, while sticking up for our own.

The listserv responses to "Anne" fall into three categories: 1) suggestions how
 Anne could connect the two segments and comments on these suggestions, 2)
 questions/answers about how to do the paper, 3) and, miscellaneous postings that
 appear peripheral to these other two discussions—like wisecracks and simple "I
 agree" statements which on the whole I have edited out of the transcript. The

greatest number of postings had to do with suggestions and comments for Anne. These suggestions, however, dovetailed again and again around and questions of how to do the paper.

There were, as I've said, two types of threads that predominate, but there were also over a dozen distinct corollary threads that branched off these two. I want to highlight four of these threads: #3 "How do I write the paper"; #4 "Selfish behavior"; #10 Clark re: Ann; and, #11 David re: Ann. These four threads give a good sense of the mix of responses: what becomes important for students in the e-class discussion and the rhetorical movement of these issues as illustrated in my students' posts to the listserv. I will begin by discussing the first two of these threads—#3 and #4—in an attempt to discover what students consider salient within the discussion.

Topic Salience and the E-Class

Thread #3: "How do I write the paper"

In the threads that follow, it wasn't possible to determine who had written certain posts because some people did not sign their names, thus "anon." Also, it was also confusing who to address in a reply because there were multiple messages tagged on to the bottom of any single message. For instance, Mandy in post #3.64 confuses me (Bill) with Pete. I edit out the intervening message threads in the transcripts below. The posts in this thread begin with #3.3 and continue #3.6, and so forth. This thread concerns the more practical side of doing paper four:

3.3-Pete> Why must we try to connect every reading we do with previous readings?

- 3.6-Kim>Pete> Because this class is centered around REVISION and the only way to do that is to connect things. Maybe that's the concept of gaining knowledge through writing.
- 3.14-Bill>Pete> Good question Pete: My answer is that we do it all the time—connect dissimilar things. We just have to open our eyes and turn around and we've already “seen” so much. To say anything about this confusion takes deciding what the connections are. From that knowledge is made; we live, grow, are bored, love, etc etc etc. So why not put a bit of method into and see how we can do it—make these connections make sense—whatever sense makes sense to us, that is.
- 3.15-Molly>Tonia>Molly> Good question . . . nobody knows.
- 3.22-Bill>Tonia>Molly> Tonia, I think she'll have to write a whole new paper because she'll be talking about the movement through Rich “carrying” her own ideas. These ideas will be somehow influenced by Rich, the email and the discussions, including this one.
- 3.27-Tonia>Bill>Tonia> oh ok :)
- 3.28-Mandy>Bill>Tonia> OK—so what about 4.2? Did I write that paper for no reason?
- 3.31-Tammy>Mandy>Bill>Tonia> Yeah?What are we supposed to do with our crisis situation.
- 3.33-Tonia>Mandy>Bill>Tonia> “No” you are suppose to use it as a reference for 4.3 . . . I think.

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3.37-Pete>Bill>Pete> Bill (or anyone that can help), I still do not understand why everything must be connected. Some of the things we are asked to connect seem so different. It would be easier to connect Jesus and Marylon Manson.

3.39-Tammy> I still don't understand how??????

3.46-Tammy>Pete>Bill>Niel> HA HA.

3.55-anon>Tonia>Mandy>Bill>Tonia> I think 4.3 is supposed to be what we have learned and if we have changed since we first read Rich. I don't understand why we call it 4.3 though since it isn't a final draft to any of the papers.

3.64-Mandy>Pete>Bill>Pete> I agree with Bill [sic] in that its hard to connect some of 4.1-4.3. I'm having trouble with that. I think since nothing really sticks out at me I'm going to try to find SOMETHING that relates (even if it's really little) and then (try to) expand on that . . .
Uh. I think.

Thread #4: Selfish Behavior

The second thread I want to deal with in this series is #4, "Selfish Behavior." Molly is its primary spokesperson. She believes strongly that Ann should stick up for herself. Even though Molly is the strongest advocate for Ann's individualism, she must confront David (#4.40). He follows Chuck's question (#4.40) and several other comments with an objection to what seems to him to be praise for overly selfish behavior. The thread begins with Molly's response to Ann:

- 4.4-Molly> I think in the way that Ann said neither women or men could be pleased in society, that is how she felt when she had to deal with her friend. In both situations, someone (Ann or women) were trying to change something that wasn't really theirs to change in the first place.
- 4.7-Tonia>Molly> ok . . . so how is Ann going to write 4.3? Is she suppose to combine 4.1 and 4.2 or is she suppose to write a whole new paper that has quotations from 4.1 and 4.2?
- 4.9-Kim>Molly> that's what I was trying to say.
- 4.10-Chuck>Molly> If it isn't theirs to change, than whos is it?
- 4.12-Kim>Tonia>Molly> I think we're supposed to write a whole new paper talking about 4.1, 4.2 and re-vision.
- 4.13-anon>Chuck>Molly> It isn't for anyone to change.
- 4.21-Molly>Chuck>Molly> I think it up to everyine to worry about them selves, not other people, maybe that is what Ann is thinking...
- 4.40-David>Molly>Chuck> That's all we need in this world, more self centered, self promoting people going around doing things without regard to other people's feelings or to the consequences.
- 4.58-Molly>David>Molly>Chuck>Molly> Thats ridiculous, I dont think people should be self centered, they should just try not to change the world all by themselves. I think Ann had so much feeling for H. that she allowed her to go and grow on her own instead of trying to corrupt her and mold her into a clone of herself. everyone has to learn to be themselves.

What Molly (4.58) says to David's objection (4.40) does not refute it—since both posts appear isolated, separated from each other by 18 other messages. Instead, David's criticism appears even handed and appropriate, while Molly does seem to have the last word. I say this because there are other threads woven in and out of this exchange have the effect of leaving the matter unresolved yet full of possibilities. An example that illustrates the discussion's productive impetus is when Molly's initial comment to Chuck (#4.21) elicits in a corollary thread another sort of reply from Ron.

4.21-Molly>Chuck>Molly> I think it up to everyone to worry about them selves, not other people, maybe that is what Ann is thinking...

4.32-Ron>Molly>Chuck>Molly> ah, but i beg to differ. it is theirs to change. isn't this why we have certain lobbist groups. how are society is run is based on the law makers. someone needs to give them a different perspective to look at otherwise there would be no progress for women or minorities. it is all of our duties to try to change people or ideas that we think are wrong.

4.50-anon₁>Ron>Molly>Chuck>Molly> You can't change anyone unless they are willing to change and most people have indivuality and an opinion so they won't want to be totally what you want them to be!

4.54-anon₂>Ron>Molly>Chuck>Molly> I think Ron made a good point, I guess that I had forgotten that some times you have to strongly present your ideas to others. If you do a good enough job

supporting it then they will be able to apply it to what they believe,
I suppose in a sort of compromise.

Others like the anonymous poster (#4.54) gravitate to the position Molly generates in her message, thus providing a literal compromise. Message #4.54 falls in the sequence before Molly's final (#4.58 above) strong renunciation of David's evaluation of her (selfish) stance. It is not that consensus is rejected then, but that it is offered as only one of the possibilities in this electronic forum.

My initial idea at the end of the e-class was to print out the unedited transcript of the e-class messages as yet another reading for the class. I imagined that since the transcript had "caught" the frantic conversation it reflected an atmosphere of stability-in-change within my students' developing classroom community. I found that the transcript had to be massively edited to link a writer's statement to its reply in order for me to have anything to say about the messages as "text." It would take too much time, so I abandoned the idea of giving it to the class. An ethnography of my students' e-literacies which would include those associated with a classroom listserv is beyond the scope of this project. Reading the messages in the dynamism of the e-class was one thing but reading them as I've presented them here is something else altogether. My students needed to finish assignment #4 and that was what I wanted them to proceed to do. What the transcript says as a representation of the e-class is a topic I have chosen for the scholarly critique that follows.

Reprise

After the e-class was over I wondered about our sometimes contentious face-to-face discussions in class and in the papers concerning Rich's feminist stance and the fact

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that it had failed to materialize in the listserv session. I wondered if this was an example of what Susan Wells calls the "reconstituted public sphere." Wells takes the term from Habermas, especially his essay, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). In her book *Sweet Reason* she says:

Habermas defines the public sphere as a discursive domain where private individuals, without the authority of state office, debate the general conduct of social and political business, holding official bodies accountable at the bar of reason. The public sphere promises equality of access and discussion governed by rationality, with no holds barred, no topics off limits. (327).

Leaving aside Wells's comments on how Habermas fails to isolate his public sphere from the authority of the state apparatus, as a writing teacher, Wells is interested in the classroom public sphere in its relation to a wider public. She observes the contradiction an attempt at public writing entail for teachers in the academy. She notes that "our [teachers'] public sphere is attenuated, fragmented, and colonized: so is everyone else's" (329). Her hope is, citing Negt and Kluge (1993), that tactics can be found "for creating partial, temporary, and multiple public spheres" (333), which would allow communities to grow and change within a democratic polity that escapes the more hierarchical and repressive features of traditional long-term communities. But could the classroom community function within such a functioning but fragmented democratic space? Of course, what "works" surely depends on the goals of the classroom which has itself endless permutations. Suffice it to say that if differences are acknowledged in this

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democratic classroom community and students are able to move beyond or incorporate their received ideas into such a community, then a "democratic polity" has a chance to exist, however attenuated.

I assume from Wells's partial/temporary classroom public sphere that the listserv would, at the very least, disrupt a classroom's normal discussion pattern. In my experience, a pattern that usually, but not always, involved a few strong male voices that dominate the discussion. What I found with the synchronous classroom listserv discussion was that when it interrupted the close message-reply sequence, it provided just such a disruption—a disruption that reproduced the fragmentation of Wells's reconstituted public sphere.

There are at least two effects of such disruptions that I observe in the e-class: 1) messages moved between the posing of questions and the terse discussion of issues, and 2) there was a lack of any dominant group opinion. Dominant, that is, in the way face-to-face discussions pit principals against one another around distinct positions. The e-discussion had multiple beginnings and endings but no middle, so there was a lack of the usual coherence and unity to the discussion. The transcript of the discussion gives a semblance of coherence but it is what Wells calls an "impossible identification" (47). In other words, my students can never enter into the Ann and M discussion except to re-figure it within their own context which will never be Ann's and M's. But instead of precluding communication this parrying of messages enables an intersubjective rhetoric which grounds a group's attempts at communication. A typical indicator of successful group communication is what becomes salient in a

discussion or conversation. It is necessarily a false indicator in as far as one requires salience to recognize that communication has taken place, but it gives us a place to start.

Eldred & Hawisher's Analysis of Topic Salience

One way to (temporarily) "fill" this middle, intersubjective ground I speak about above, and be able to read my students' e-class discussion is to use terms from critics who have experience with computer mediated communication (CMC). Eldred and Hawisher in their review article, "Researching Electronic Networks," provide one such method for reading. Their essay presents the notion that participants arrive at "salience" within an on-line discussion. Again, such practice of coherence is "impossible" but effective in exposing the dynamic of on-line discourse. It presents a macro view of the e-discussion, so I present it as a first step toward a rhetorical analysis of several threads in the transcript.

In their essay, Eldred and Hawisher "translate" terms used in social psychological discourse that describes the behavior of CMC groups. They say that social psychological research posits widely varying results when it comes to how CMC groups behave. For instance, CMC's either "always make extreme shifts in the direction of the norm, or CMC groups do not gravitate to the norm at all" (339). Eldred and Hawisher report that still other researchers who want to square these findings noticed that perhaps "polarization away from or toward the norm might be more directly related to how individuals perceive their relation to other members on the network" (340). Eldred and Hawisher say the position individuals in CMC take toward one another tend toward group identification in

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response to what becomes strongly felt or "salient" (340). Accordingly, what becomes salient has nothing to do with the tasks the group happens to be focused on, what the majority wants, or what position is first advocated. It depends on how strong certain social norms are for the group. I argue that these norms—structures of group behavior—are created rhetorically.

Eldred and Hawisher give an example of how this awareness of social norms can configure the attitudes of a CMC group when they cite Romano's 1993 essay. Romano presented her composition class, which contained a majority of Hispanic students, with a reading she expected would produce a discussion about what it meant to be Chicano/a, but instead most of her students responded from positions located in the mainstream, middle-class population. They refused to recognize their own marginal class positions; it was not salient for the discussion.

When my class went on the listserv I was expecting a heated discussion of Rich's ideas. Like Romano, I also got something different. I was prepared to hear a repeat of the strong opinions some had expressed against Rich in the face-to-face discussions. Students' posts to the listserv side-step Rich's polemics to concentrate on what was salient for them, that is: an individual's right to be themselves. They refused to be predictably positioned by the authority (me) in the e-class and responded to each other in relation to our classroom community's social norm that says the individual has power both inside and outside the group.

The first two threads I found on the listserv neatly contain the contradictions Eldred and Hawisher say CMC seems to evoke. The listserv not only provides a forum

(thread #3) to ask and answer practical questions (provides movement toward the teacher's norm), but allow users to readily communicate about social matters (movement away from the norm). These two threads occur together and are "squared" when the e-class weaves a practical exchange on the assignment together with and as context for a discussion. This discussion then veers off from giving advice to Ann for her revision to testimonies on individualism, especially threads sponsored by Kim and Molly. These testimonials are given otherwise and generate more general propositions which center around what it means to care for someone and for oneself, the most salient feature of the e-class.

In the e-class this norm exists within the broader salience of how gender might mediate individual rights. As the e-class continued, individual student identities seemed malleable within, in Wells' words, the "partial, temporary, and multiple" public sphere—these discursive electronic bivouacs where flickering "bodies" choose to communicate. I suspect that many students who posted to the list that hour sensed that they were re-visioning the invested language of the dominant culture while at the same time they were conciliatory with one another. They were happy to try on different discursive positions as if their language were clothing. The nature of the movement of messages on the listserv discussion produced a freedom to see the other side of the argument in a way that didn't lock them into ways of being that would on an ordinary day play havoc with their conservative ideas concerning gendered norms. But just what was the role of the technology in enabling my students to say what they said to each other? With the help of Susan Wells's rhetoric of intersubjectivity I explore those issues in the next section.

Susan Wells's Rhetoric Of Intersubjectivity: Language And Narrative

The Intersubjective

The e-class discussion is one of those discourses of modernity—fragmented, discontinuous, differentiated—that Susan Wells concerns herself with in *Sweet Reason*. I employ her rhetoric in what follows to do a rhetorical analysis of the listserv. Wells says in her book that the “texts [of modernity] are oriented to varied discursive practices, including forms of reason, and their supporting intersubjective relations are deeply sedimented in such institutions as academic disciplines and professions and in practices of language and media” (3). Wells’s rhetoric of intersubjectivity implies that there are many different ways of constructing subjects within a discipline’s content and practice. In higher education and particularly in the college writing classroom, technology has contributed to emerging and declining relations between discursive sediments. One example of this is when students, who are techno-literate, help other students in the networked classroom and free up the writing teacher to concentrate on the lesson plan.

Wells is interested in the constituent features of these sedimented texts and the ways they act intersubjectively, that is, how writers and readers are constructed together and independently by the action of the discourse they participate in. It’s important to note that this rhetoric works communally to explain the discursive interactions of subjects and, for my purposes, the ways the first-year composition (FYC) school subject interacts with disciplinary structures that reflect the possibility of communication and/or its failure within the classroom. The conversations we as teachers most observe as basis for our teaching are built on many that have come before us and those who will be our students.

I employ Wells's terms, *language* and *narration*, to read the second pair of threads (#10 and #11) from the e-class. These threads show the dynamic of intersubjective discursive practice stimulated by computer-mediated communication (CMC). I present the posts in these threads as they might appear stripped of the other intervening messages, thus effecting a dampening of the "noise" present in the actual listserv discussion.

Thread #10: "Let H be H"

In this thread, Clark makes his one and only contribution to the listserv. What he says is significant because it specifically addresses the excerpts from Ann's paper and is similar to initial posts by Kim (#1.1), Molly (#4.4), Mandy (#5.5) and David (#11.25). These students are the ones who choose to respond directly to my prompt concerning Ann's paper. Clark starts with a summary and then makes a conclusion, while Ron, Molly, anon, and Mandy in their replies choose to comment only on what Clark has said in regards Ann. There is no inter-discussion or posts by participants one on another in this thread:

10.24-Clark> Ann finishes her last [first?] paragraph with the idea of how society is forcing views upon us. She blames society, so it must be wrong to force views on people, and I believe it is. The second paragraph is about how Ann would not try to change the way H. is. I think since Ann sees forcing views on people is bad, she does not want to become a person who does so. She would rather let H. be as H. would be.

10.47-Ron>Clark> This is a good point, although I wonder where the fine line is between forcing a view and offering a point of view with some information to back it up. After all, every reading we've done in this class is someones point of view and I rarely feel that it is forced upon me, although I do admit that sometimes I do. I feel that it is more important to listen to the opposition of your view and explain it than to just say, That's the way it is and if you don't think so then you're wrong!

10.51-Molly>Clark> I agree with you Clark, It might not be standing up for yourself, but is it really worth the effort to try to change other people (H. or men or society) to mold them to your expectations? I think if they are that bad in the first place they are people I wouldn't want to be around anyway.

10.77-anon>Clark> Facing these people can be very irritating, but the satisfaction that you receive when they finally see how naive they were is well worth it. If you have a point of view worth fighting for, don't back down and try to help out these poor naive souls see it.

10.80-Mandy>Clark> I also agree with Clark also. but I think that it is very important to stand up for yourself, and it is worth trying to change other people. they may not change, but you can at least try. That is basically what we are doing right now, listening to each other and trying to change others views, while sticking up for our own.

As one notices, Clark and all the others who reply to him in this thread are not particularly interested in giving Ann advice on her paper. They're more interested in advising her about her behavior vis-à-vis H. They have directly interjected themselves into the narrative of Ann and H.

Clark begins these narrative interventions when he concludes: "Ann sees forcing views on people is bad, she doesn't want to become a person who does so." Ron (#10.47), likewise, is also giving Ann personal advice: "it is more important to listen to the opposition of your view and explain it." In other words, he suggests she try to understand those in opposition to her instead of maintaining a position which ends with the defiant: "That's the way it is and if you don't think so than your wrong!" He implies that you might learn something by listening to others, so Ann ought to know that such an option is available for H, too. Molly (#10.51) says she agrees with Clark, i.e., Ann doesn't want to be a person who forces her views on people. Yet, she worries that such a position might not be seen to be "standing up for yourself," and why should you, she says, if those you're trying to convince "are that bad in the first place." Thus, she seems to reject Ron's option to listen to the opposing side because for her there is no redeeming the person (H)—her actions much less her words. She reiterates Ron's position but goes a level deeper to a judgment of character based on words *and* actions. This exposes Molly's passionate view expressed in other of her posts that character can't be reformed by argument. Anon (#77) thinks it worth giving someone the truth as she or he sees it and expresses "satisfaction" about the positive effect one can have on someone else's naiveté. Molly's "bad" person is now merely a person who lacks sufficient information or experience, someone who could

benefit from Ron's "explanation." Finally, Mandy (#80) steps back to reflect on the very process of discussing these ideas. She says: "That [standing up for yourself] is basically what we are doing right now, listening to each other and trying to change others views, while sticking up for our own." I would add that these student writers are also "standing up" to their teacher in their refusal to merely give practical editorial advice to Ann. They instead act like fiction editors trying to fix the plot of the story Ann lays out. They have caught the important (for them) narrative thread offered by Ann's writing and transformed it into writing that interpolates her facts on various levels. Whether the re-narrativizing they do becomes "helpful" to Ann the writer is for them a different discussion.

This thread shows the e-discussion escaping the confines of the writing assignment into a more public sphere where personal behavior is more important. It takes the writing to a more public and ethical level, where action can be contemplated and taken. These students might just determine that their lives need changing as a consequence of their having written a reply to Ann. Yet, the writing assignment is not alien to the public sphere as thread #11 illustrates. I talk about it next.

In contrast, thread #11 sticks to giving Ann advice on her paper by not only suggesting connections Ann could make within her drafts but ways she could employ Rich's ideas on re-vision to the task of writing the assignment but also any future writing task. This is a more "by the book" response.

Thread #11: "I" to the 'we'"

David gives his opinion on how Ann will combine the two excerpts, but in contrast to the above thread (#10), Kim becomes the one Chuck replies to and the person who

answers him to the approval of Tammy:

11.25-David> I think the second paragraph shows the very act or RE-Vision. It seems to me that Ann has gotten a new perspective, just from sitting back and examining her thoughts. In the first paragraph, she seems more close minded and hostile, but she has changed in the second one, becoming more sensitive and aware of the other person's side of the story.

11.36-Kim>David> Adding to David's idea, maybe add [Ann?] could relate this "revison" of hers to Rich's revision of her self. How she went from the "I" to the "us" or "we". That would be a topic Ann could bring up in her paper about revision (4.3).

11.57-Chuck>Kim>David> Didn't Rich go from the "we" and "us" to the "I"? I could be wrong. Its been a while since I read it.

11.62-Kim>Chuck>Jule>David> Chuck, in her essay, Rich spoke as the "I". In the vi[d]eo she spoke more from the "we"

11.65-Tammy>Kim>Chuck>Jule>David> Good point Kim.

In accordance with my initial prompt to the list, David (#11.25) describes Ann's two statements as an example of the "very act of RE-Vision." He says Ann shows she has changed from "close minded and hostile" to "sensitive and aware." Kim then "adds" to what David says by bringing up the way Rich seems to have re-visioned herself again in the video ("Language") we watched where she spoke about her poetry to Bill Moyers. This change from the individual concerns (the "I") expressed in her essay ("Re-vision")

and her pre-1970 poetry, to more concern for the communal ("we") in her video statements about poets and poetry, was something that came out in a previous face-to-face class discussion. Kim is not only reminding the class of this idea (without referring directly to its origin), but she reminds the class of Rich's further revision of her views by responding to Chuck's question (#11.62). Tammy ends the discussion by complimenting Kim—something not usually available in a face-to-face classroom discussion. What can be made of these two threads—one expressing advice to the Ann character concerning her behavior with her friend H and the other giving advice to Ann the writer, a character in a different story? And more generally, what is the usefulness of piecing these strands of written conversation together to form something that never appeared in anything like the same coherent form at the time.

For one thing, the friendly behavior exhibited in the e-discussion and the ready involvement in each others' lives provided a moment for collegiality and commiseration, elements characteristic to more well established physical communities. This community spirit was the result of the dynamic reading and writing the listserv. During the hour long e-class the class read the posts through one interrupted episode after another. The speed of the e-discussion as the posts moved onto and off of computer screens was never available to analysis during this time. My re-edited transcript does give the impression that both the readers and the writers in the e-discussion are present in language and available to each other as material for revision and interpretation. For that moment the boundary between language and bodies blurred and the phenomenon of revision that Rich spent decades managing appeared

instantly. At least that's what I think now as I look over the transcript. The paradox of what seems instantly revelatory retrospectively is troubling. On the one hand such a recognition always ends the discussion, while on the other, interminable discussion makes the process trivial. I had to find the right audience for my e-discussion transcript.

When I first looked at the recovered transcript of the e-discussion I didn't know who might be interested in it. The transcript demanded to be read critically but who would profit from such a critique? If I'd presented it to my students right after the e-class it would have been just another text to connect to the others they had already been subjected to. There is a moment in a writing course like mine that enough is enough: outside texts can take over from a concentration on student writing. Are the implications of the e-class principally pedagogical? Is it more useful for teachers as a text of a rhetoric my students performed interactively and electronically? One way to answer these questions might be to do a rhetorical analysis of the listserv discussion text to see what surfaces that writing teachers like myself can use in their classrooms. My choice of tool for such an analysis is Susan Wells's rhetoric of intersubjectivity.

Intersubjective Rhetoric of the E-Class

Teacher Motivation

My own motivation for having students do the e-class was based on my dislike for the way my students' conducted their face-to-face discussions. Student talk in these discussions appeared to me to be stratified in more or less dominant cultural terms. That was what I chose to believe. I attempted to intervene in these attitudes by sending my students into the machine

of the e-class. Inside, their writing-as-signal was transformed and coded differently by the "noise" in the synchronous CMC. The transcript I present in this chapter is a way to see the way students generate, arrange, and deliver ideas in an on-line discussion.

I present this reading of the listserv as a language problem in the form of a pedagogical problem. Let me be clear about the nature of this problem. It starts with my initial desire to use the listserv to understand and facilitate better teaching and better student writing using technology. I understand that my transcription of the listserv has repeated the move toward unity and coherence which the e-class was designed to avoid in the first place. The result is the usual desultory outcome for teacher desire. That is, students slavishly do what you tell them to do which is not what you want, or they do what they want to do which is not, again, what you want. The e-class transcript is a document of thwarted desire, a supplement to the chaotic e-discussion which cannot be parsed on its own. I wish to blame and to praise the listserv for this outcome.

The listserv "machine," instead of easing this process, interfered with my ability to let language be "elided and rendered transparent," which according to Wells, is specifically the province of the discourse of the university (29). With the transcript, however, I return my students' language to the confines of the university. A discourse I am contracted to serve by my position as a composition teacher in the academy. A position I tried to serve in a more efficient way through the listserv. Of course, I could not maintain this efficiency as evidenced by the two threads (#10 & #11) I've already examined. What happened by technologizing my students' writing was a more complicated discursive practice not one that was less so.

This machine efficient discussion I wished to encourage, therefore, was hobbled by the very technology I wished to use to hold a discussion. For the machine (a synecdoche for the synchronous listserv discussion) helped obscure the transparency of language. This made the work of reading Ann's paper that much harder to perform. To see this process in action, let us move along the arc of Wells's story of the rhetoric of intersubjectivity as she explains it in *Sweet Reason*, while at the same time laying out the story of Clark, Kim, David, and Molly and the others who talk about Ann. If we consider the unstable nature of language and our inability to know our interlocutor with any certainty, then we are always already confronted with the materiality of language in that it incites us to form provisional selves upon a "ground" of figure and narrative. We configure narratives as supplement in the eye ("I") of the reader. Then when we move to our concern here with pedagogy, these narratives are organized at the university and in the scene of teaching into disciplines. Disciplines, according to Wells, get constructed as harbingers of foundational content, but initially come into existence in the intersubjective rhetorical moment that furthers a public (Dewey). It needs to be clear, however, that the school subjects (teacher and student) resist being fully formed as a pre-condition to such a rhetoric. This school subject interacts in formation by participating in the necessity and inevitability of error, the materiality of language, and the promise of narrative as supplement.

Inevitability of Error

Wells describes language as unstable in regard to its materiality and in the "status of reading" within an intersubjective rhetoric. This instability is a matter of error:

Since language operates among subjects, since it is irreducibly mobil, it is necessarily implicated in error. . . . Error establishes a textual gap between sleep and

waking, between representation and consciousness, between quotation and source, so that desire, the unconscious, and the text are adumbrated as absence and error.

(11-12)

As individuals we live in error but are unconcerned at most times by its consequences. The listserv experience I describe brings this state of error to mind, but at the same time, as Wells says, it produces no "scandal." We accept the level of communication on the listserv as the best that could be done.

In the listserv my students are presented with a problem of language that provokes them to take up stances (character positions) in a narrative that arrives scrambled—in error—and must be unraveled. They follow other narrative paths, ones opened up by the listserv CMC and the isolation of each individual writer. How do these students begin to know themselves as writers? Develop a writer's consciousness? If as Wells says, consciousness begins with a call to language, then in the threads I describe above, the call is made when the class responds to Ann's paragraphs, and by the power of Ann's narrative which requires an answer. In retrospect, Ann's narrative was more evocative than my request that students give Ann advice on writing her paper. One reason for this was the ease with which students responded to story with another story. What happened was they used narrative to help fix their language that is always already unstable.

Readers attempt to stabilize texts by coming to consciousness in respect to them. Narrative is one way we do this. Susan Wells says that Lacan "is struck by the image of consciousness as something that befalls the subject, something organized in response to a call" (9). The action of call and response happens within the text that the reader imagines reading.

And that the response it initiates is itself a call that the writer succumbs to, a call to truth as "an act of the subject, a willingness to call something new from the displaced story by naming it" (12). The narrative displacement happens in the e-class as an effect produced by the technology that still must be named to be resonant. The writing classroom community operates to help in this naming. The technology provides faster access to the narrative, but we still need to slow the e-narrative down afterward to accomplish the interpretive naming. The call generated by writing with technology creates multiple responses that redefine what sort of subsequent call(s) to make in response.

The call I made by posting that first e-mail to the list asked students to help Ann associate two texts may have organize some of my students' responses—Kim's especially—but it did not sanction Clark, for instance, to make his personal evaluation of Ann's dealings with M. He interpreted (named) the call differently. My position as just another writer among many on the listserv permitted such a response. It just so happened that their messages proceeded from Ann's narrative and not from my assignment. Therefore, in Wells's terms their responses to the call were steeped in error. Clark's response and those who responded to him wrote in error.

On one level there are the sentence level errors in the posts, but that is not what Wells means when she talks about error. Nor does she mean a mistaking of the purpose of the act of communication—something that borders on a refusal of communication. It's more to do with misprision based on a good-faith effort to communicate. I have to say, however, that these qualifications are strictly pedagogical in nature: interpretations made by me, the teacher-reader, within his purview of judgment. Error in the Wellsian sense

(Lacanian) is not applied, at least not in Wells's early chapters of her book. When she discusses a classroom "outburst" in her chapter six ("Giving an Ordered History: Narrative in the Discourse of the Classroom"), she significantly complicates her theory of error.

The notion of a good-faith error, which I take from Wells application of the term, tends to compound on error and provide its own logic: Clark gives an analysis, Ron counters with his own take on the matter, Molly agrees but disagrees, and so on. And what would not be in error? Silence? Letting Ann's story of M stand on its feet amid the silence of her readers and classmates? Or, the silence of the face-to-face classroom when a question is posed and no one feels moved to respond? In this case the "machine" goaded students to respond. As Wells would say, as she does when talking about the *Phaedrus*, language enflames desire (for the other)—a rhetoric of seduction and response to seduction. Yet these seductions go awry and must on reflection be built into structures of call and response. And the prize(s) one would expect by way of these seductions? Perhaps they are fresh ideas that let the dance continue—the dance of language that the machine initiates but cannot sustain. Sustaining the dance is what communities are for. Teachers and classrooms in the case of electronic writing pedagogy should facilitate the dance of ideas for students. It starts with the teacher's desire, however perpetrated in error, and the students' response, however e-meshed in error.

In the narrative I set up between Ann and H, my desire that students affect some sort of personal change by writing about Ann is buried in the discourse of the assignment. Thus when they observe this "hidden secret" (after Lacan), the student reader has to break

my narrative chain (connecting Ann and "re-vision") and go after the hidden desire on his or her own, that is, if they want to affect (naming) something new in the process. This new "thread" was out of my control since it was the product of error. Wells says: "The reader, too, accedes to error, can only read in error. Unless the reader comes to the text as desiring, nothing at all will happen. But the reader implicated in his own desire is at a bias to the text's own embodiment of (possibly) other desired others" (12-13). We wouldn't have the recognition of desire—almost a metaphysical notion—without the error. And what prevents this recognition most of the time is the transparency of the text. With the listserv, the "noise" introduced by the synchronous nature of the listserv helps direct, in this case, student-reader desire, a desire masked again: in the act of writing by the drive for coherence and narrative on the one hand, and the resistance on the other. Pete's question: "Why must we try to connect every reading we do with a previous reading?" (#3.3) interrogates the desire I was trying to impose on them with my post. He is looking through the proposition content of the assignment to the efficacy of the call. What's in it for me? he says. He disagrees that what I'm asking him to do is important, for whatever reason. He registers his disagreement with his silence. He never does agree, not so much to the particular desire, but to what I would call a *will to desire* and thus ends up refusing the (classroom) community's rhetoric of intersubjectivity. On the other hand, those like Molly, Kim, Clark, David and many of my other students, they accept Ann's problem as their own. Their desire is ready-made and only acts like mine in a gravitational manner: like masses orbiting an imagined center. Each is bounded by a sense of community that

each has a stake in keeping together. Such a stake is realized on multiple levels and made material in time. When Wells tells us that “[l]anguage is (also) material” (13), she means that language easily slides into material practices that bind us as firmly as more physical bonds, but it is also able to release those bonds.

Materiality of Language

In her relationship to Rich and M, Ann forms what Wells calls the “material signifier [that] incites a rhetoric of intersubjectivity to analyze its embodiment in particular forms, sounds, inscriptions, and systems of distribution. . . .” (13). Such a rhetorical system is exemplified by the electronic listserv discussion. As I’ve said, many of my students who wrote about Ann became involved in and were incited by this intersubjective rhetoric. Not content with Ann’s representations of her life, they helped, as Wells says, reconfigure “relations among subjects.” Wells explains it this way: “[T]he truth of language is not to be sought in its representation of a world but in its power to produce the ground onto which representations will be summoned” (23). The subject’s referent on this “ground” is not only represented in the listserv it is multi-presented. The virtual ground of the listserv summons representations more rapidly and in greater number, thus generating a productive anxiety, which would be hard to simulate otherwise.

This nervous energy the technology infuses into the writing classroom affects communication and provokes change. It helps me understand what is meant by the materiality of language. In Wells’s terms: “Language, then, is both the incitement for the formation of the self and a repository of metaphors for that process” (24). Form embodies content as persuasion utilizes trope. Such linguistic objects like metaphors cannot provide

practical use if they are not transformed by subjects interacting within language. In this system, rationality gives up its privilege to a language that provides common cause, a good-faith reading. "Discourse is seen as an intersubjective play in which proposition is contingent but figure is obligatory, in the form of metaphor, metonymy, and their unconscious analogues, condensation and displacement" (25). This action of the figural on the material constantly divides and subverts coherence at the moment it is attained. "There is no end to the story of division. The subject does not enter analysis and escape into a utopian tale of integration and authenticity (26). Clark, et al (#10) especially participate in the "story of division" within the listserv. The practical way students like Clark did this was through the phenomenon of reading within the participatory e-class community.

Reading is the bridge between Wells's two figures: *language* and *narrative*, between thought and writing. The reader re-configures the language of the text into a story of reading and then is able to act (write) across time upon what is read together with others. The listserv had a particular effect when it came to the ways students interacted across the time of discussion, which was speeded up by the operation of the technology. These effects proceeded from the way we read the listserv messages and came up with what was happening.

Wells explains the truth telling possibilities of reading this way: "Reading, then, is a practice generative of truth when it disrupts the machine of repetition that is the text's coherence" (28). Students in my e-class gave themselves to Ann to be her readers in an effort to make sense of what I proposed in my assignment. They wished to establish truth, which appears on its face (of the transcript) as an autonomous act of communication. But

the phenomenon of reading electronically gives a different perspective. Because of the noise in the listserv system we had to listen harder to one another. This in itself might not have produced anything new but the recognition of how the disruptions in signal might work to affect difference gives the synchronous listserv CMC its potential as a radical communication device. A potential that is absent from most technologies which attain to transparency. I contend that the noise, the semi-chaos of the interface, is the chink in techno-systems—places that contain the greatest theoretical charge. My class participated in such a site in the act of reading and writing on the listserv.

Such a method of reading has a very important rhetorical function for me. It has to do with what Wells says about reading: "Reading calls out for the adequate listener, who does not approach the text as its own valuation or accept its sense of what is important" (27). The adequacy of such a listener is embodied in the way the class questions the proposition (put forward by Molly, especially) woven throughout the e-discussion that no matter what the reading one should be allowed to stay unchanged (e.g., convincing M to change). Wells helps us see the inevitability of change by reading and listening. She says: "For Lacan, to read is to translate proposition into episode" (28). Clark, for instance, translates the proposition that there is potentially a connection between what Ann says about Rich and what Ann did in relation to M into a narrative which makes Ann the heroine of her encounter with M. Thus the truth claim that Ann makes is taken by Clark and set into a "different register" (30), another scene of coherence. He is not concerned with the direct referent to any truth claim Ann is making but instead purposes a different orientation

to these claims. At the time I took his purpose as fulfilling my assignment to the listserv—an artifact of misreading on my part. Now I see that Clark's post arrives (like Lacan's letter) and remains unopened.

With Wells's help I tell the tale of reading (the listserv) as I wish here, as the story of intersubjective rhetoric. The significance of this narrative of reading does not *depend* on my reading or my students. We step into the stream and are carried along, although it is a necessary trick of language that imagines us as we take that step because we are always already within. The e-class exposes the promise of such instrumental virtuality. Any hubris we might have at the thought of triumphal inhabiting of these new electronic worlds should be moderated by the fact that materiality has always been our Achilles' heel, but that it is also the root of our desire without which the virtual would hold no appeal. This desire is most easily revealed in narrative.

Promise of Narrative as Supplement in the Electronic Writing Classroom

The underlying structure of the narrative has not changed, a structure that supports both language and the unconscious, a structure of delay, absence, division of the subject, and error: in sum, of desire. (10)

The language of my assignment for the e-class instructed students to link two texts together as an example of revision, which then produced their narratives about the possible connection between Ann and Rich and Ann and M. The narratives created a situation that made possible both group and individual acts. Acts are defined here as interpretive gestures, acts of reading and writing. These actions were performed by my students within a rhetoric that allowed them to sidestep their received notions of

themselves and their communities. These ideas were not expelled, so much as other ideas like personal sacrifice and individualism became more salient within the e-class community.

The listserv also demonstrated the way, as Wells explains, "language permits a system of exchanges" (9). Such exchanges get narrativized, in her words, as "both an assertion of facts that support a claim and also the most easily confectioned of ornaments" (31). Wells reverses the traditional valence on narrative by characterizing it as argument with a sugary glaze. I employ this doubling as well. What is confectioned in the listserv is not only character and plot but space and time. The dynamic rush of communication replaces the traditional aesthetic experience (contemplated in solitude) with the buzz of the e-narrative that mainlines the pleasure straight from the fingers to the brain. Unlike the traditional narrative "confections," the stories within the listserv are written in the "need for speed" genre of communication, but this still tends to brand them juvenile and trivial, and like narrative in general, all too easily ignored and denigrated.

Wells wants us to pay attention to narrative because, citing Habermas, she says it maintains the lifeworld's "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns" (33). This is no less true in e-spaces like listservs. These patterns can be accessed through the rhetorical use and analysis of narrative. Yet, for Wells, Habermas cannot tell the whole story even of narrative because the idea of the lifeworld "coheres with traditional understandings of narrative as conservative, prereflective, and socially integrating" (33). Wells uses Habermas to theorize narrative as the prevalent content of the lifeworld but reserves the right to analyze this discourse for

the ambiguous relation of narrative to system. As lifeworld and system differentiate in modern societies, the lifeworld becomes available for colonization by system. Its structures are instrumentalized and silently put at the service of the system. Such processes set the canonic themes of the Frankfurt School: the commodification of leisure time and the subordination of education to the training needs of a market economy.

(37)

The principle motivation (desire) I had for establishing the listserv was to disturb my students' conservative notions of gender, which I read now as an example of colonialization of the lifeworld by system. The system was my students' local cultural system, and I meant to be their liberator from this system. Wells would describe my desire as an attempt to free my students from certain "[c]olonized and distorted interactions." What I couldn't see at the time was what she adds: Such interactions "undoubtedly form the majority of our written and spoken acts" (38). It is unremarkable then that what I was proposing (or imposing on my students) when I gave them Ann/Rich/M was a call to re-colonialize their interactions by a different form of system. I want to argue, however, that the listserv technology provided my students with a way to subvert their desire and mine and to answer both in unique and creative ways.

The system(s) that encompass my students' conservative received notions of gender and my own particular view as exemplified by Rich are enmeshed in material discourse structures that I see as "delinguistified." Thus, as Wells explains, "to translate them into language is to open them to transformation" (39). The listserv translates my students material

discourse (and perhaps my own) into language. As a college teacher, I recognize these delinguistified structures most readily in the disciplinary forms they take in the academy. And there these disciplinary forms are produced *and* disrupted by the action of student/teacher classroom narrative.

I am concerned with disciplinarity as a composition teacher because the field of composition is constructed as an "empty" discipline and taught for the most part by underpaid, non-specialists. Historicizing writing instruction is a prime theoretical pursuit for these teachers. I prefer to keep trying to effect a disciplinary practice not in some blind hope but in the desire to continue to create and re-create a discourse community that takes care of current, common practice. I'm not interested in how the past forces us to teach writing but as it can inform an ongoing practice. In this way I agree with Wells: "The discipline is established as an organized framework for gathering stories, deciding on their relations to one another, and adjudicating among their competing versions" (43). Such an ongoing process does not want to finally arrive at disciplinarity but be always moving toward it.

Disciplinary narratives have to periodically be revitalized by a rereading of what interrupts their story line, so that the embedded displacements and anomalies can be exposed and let to redirect a new story. However, that isn't the whole problem. Wells tells us that sedimentation is impossible to prevent and that as a discipline matures, explicit narrative is often rejected for a more stable reason (43). But to read the story of a discipline's work and progress exposes what she calls the counterfactual truth found in the "the real of reading," where the reader within his or her discipline is "rhetorically situated

in a time of narration, placed at a bias to his or her own ideology" (45). That bias is what was exposed for me and my students in the listserv discussion. Therefore, the lesson follows from Wells, that

[o]ur discourses are not simply or transparently rational; they are marked by all the sources of error, misprision, and deflected understanding that accompany our own entries into language as speaking subjects. (50)

Reading this way—in this rhetorical way—gives us an opportunity to interrupt “the happy story of society as a good student, rhetorical analysis finds in the structures of communicative action the discontinuous and unedifying story of domination and resistance” (51). Another way to look at it is: If writing teachers can learn to observe the way we have “entered into language,” then we should be able to see the way we turn proposition to narrative and back again. And the way

[n]arrative prompts the creation of a supplement, a translation, an analysis that runs along the thread of the story, articulating its own relation to time and performing in a different register its transformative and revelatory possibilities. The critical discourse, the discourse of rhetorical analysis, is not scandalized by error: rhetoric has never known anything but probability, approximation, opinion, words seen only as words. Rhetoric does not add to or substitute for the text’s articulation of time but transposes its work with time into a different register, one in which a different sort of critical exchange is possible (52).

Rhetoric's link to the narrative of coming to knowledge by way of language—being persuaded by fine language—is the student's way of being. Wells says, that since Quintillian (and unofficially since Phaedrus) "rhetoric has been a discipline forming subjects capable of a certain kind of linguistic agency. . . . It survives as an 'ordinary school' subject." There are two tendencies for this pedagogy: it either makes rhetoric into a "permanent vulgarization or a public service," or, it "implicates rhetoric in a narrative of development," by which she means progress. The e-class participates in both tendencies and that for me is its worth. At least I know what I'm getting into on-line where there are multiple narratives of teaching and learning. It is up to me to quell the anxiety to find the right narrative to expound.

Narratives of the writing classroom are differentiated by adding technology. The rhetoric that is produced has material effects in the way it constructs FYC school subjects. And language mediated by classroom technology constructs the FYC school subject more efficiently but allows many more opportunities for resistance and creativity (as I will demonstrate in my next case study). It didn't use to be as easy to see a way out of the intense conformity of schooling, but the machine can point to multiple ways. Students and teachers can learn to listen above the drone of the machine's noise on the one hand, and listen under the silence produced by the well-oiled discourse machines of system.

My efforts in this case study have been, in the words of Susan Wells, to move toward a rhetoric that "attends to the materiality of writing, to its entrainment in relations of desire and displacement, [a rhetoric that] reads in the discourses of modernity various narratives of power, knowledge, disclosure, and conversion" (4). The work of writing and

reading are actions. As Wells says, they suggest

interventions into other events, events that may have already been textualized in alternative and competing discourses. To analyze those relations, relations of intertextuality, returns us to the topic of language, since we must consider quotation, doubling of meaning, and multiplied locations of the reading subject. (5)

Such intertextuality as evinced by my FYC e-class was set in motion by my students' pre-listserv dislike for Rich's essay, by their crisis moment, and by the need they acquired to help Ann figure out her revision process. These issues became important as intervention for my students' self-discovery. Each connection I asked them to make doubled meanings, removed the imposition of meanings received from outside and carried to the discussion from the face-to-face discussions, and gathered other meanings in the maelstrom of the listserv conversation. In any class discussion, time for reflection has to necessarily succeed this centrifugal experience (Bakhtin). And the subsequent writing of papers should then provide that obligatory space to let the centripetal take over until the whole process starts all over again.

The case study that follows examines the use of laptop computers in the FYC classroom. Laptops are another way that the writing class is changing as a community of writers and readers. As was the case with the listserv, laptops can be invasive instruments of control by system. But as we've seen, such control cannot be depended on to be directed consistently. The teacher can't depend on controlling what technology does in classrooms and neither can those (administrators) delegated to the task by system. There

are always opportunities for resistance and creativity. This is not a naive utopianism but a case of risky business—no one is able to predict the outcome. The way language poses technology is really what teachers should be concerned about. This rhetoric which is available most specifically in disciplinary narratives is being rewritten in technology-rich classrooms. What the technology will say should be up to teachers and students. One clue to this rhetoric is to actually ask students what they are doing with the powerful machines like laptop computers that we give them so blithely to use. And that is what I do in this next section.

Case Study #2: Student Resistance to All Laptops All the Time

Introduction

In this section I want to again work on a problem of language in the mode of Susan Wells's teacher/theorist. This time it concerns student resistance in a writing classroom at a laptop college. Initially it doesn't seem like a writing problem but more of a behavioral or a power issue. What I mean by student resistance is that in these classrooms because students have constant access to the Web they tend to do other things beside the work of the class when in class. Therefore, they resist instruction in the traditional ways it is delivered by the teacher. So it is a problem of teaching and learning: how does the teacher get the attention of her students in order to fulfill the contract she has with them and the institution to teach writing. My solution is to concentrate for a moment on the kinds of activities students do that are not in the teacher's plan for their learning. I want to show how these acts can somehow be made part of that plan, a part of student learning and the work of the class.

Writing Otherwise

College students are not unlike their teachers when it comes to change. They resist it. They will resist despite their claims otherwise. They can't help it, it's a part of the "asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt) they meet with in classrooms. And it's not a simple matter of "students will be students." Within organizations such as schools there are contra-practices that individuals—students in this case—find to do in order to be more creative and individualistic. I argue that the implementation of all laptops on college campuses allow students new forms of resistance, new forms of creativity and individualism, and offer teachers new opportunities for teaching.

In this section, I interrelate critical perspectives on resistance with my own experience with laptop-rich teaching and learning environments, and investigate what it means for students and teachers to work together in such classrooms. I wish to establish a link between theory-based writing instruction and student resistance in networked classrooms. My idea is that theory can affect the resistance played out in the electronic networked classroom. This resistant student activity, what I call "writing otherwise" (i.e., e-mail, chat rooms, computer games), finds a place on the margins of most classroom communities. Theories of resistance place this marginal student writing where these same theories have no affect because any type of resistance is so mercurial it finds a new margin every time the previous one is colonized by practitioner-theory.

Perhaps as Readings (1996) says, there is no more center, so those on the margins (including our students) are adrift in a nostalgia for lost worlds. But it's not a bad thing to acknowledge these worlds as lost, as Susan Wells teaches us, and try to rein our students onto

a ground of intersubjective rhetoric and possibility. My ultimate goal is to persuade students to take up the tools of theorizing their own resistance. Thus, they would produce multiple theories that would help ground both students and teachers in community and in dialog while constructing a learning space together. I hope these interchanges I describe here between teachers and students—mediated by their laptops—will enable you to begin to think about the effects of your own present and future use of instructional technologies to teach writing.

Resistance

In an attempt to define the limits of student resistance, I begin by offering John Trimbur's (1994) helpful distinction between two types of classroom resistance. On the one hand, student resistance entails a "reluctance or unwillingness, based on social position to question authority," and on the other, student resistance implies "a central goal of radical pedagogy, namely eliciting counter-readings of the codes and practices of the dominant culture" (202). Teachers insist that the former be "overcome in order to promote critical thinking," while the latter indicates a "positive" trait radical teachers attempt to instill in students.

According to Derek Briton (1997), students' resistance that question authority and a teacher's insistence that students read critically and politically, intersect in a Lacanian (classroom) imaginary. The imaginary in this case is a representation composed of discourses that move toward establishing a political ideal despite the proliferation of multiple meanings. These meanings establish themselves within "the capacity of language to accommodate unconscious intentionality even in the most apparently mundane and innocent banter" (Gothby qtd. in Briton 7: 126). Briton reminds us "that the *very*

condition for the possibility of conscious knowledge is the active repression of some other knowledge at the level of the unconscious" (7). These repressions are always in process or returning in the form of resistance. In other words, power as an articulation of discourse constructs subjects who are not totally determined by such articulations—"as is confirmed by the ongoing resistance of subjects to the System, despite the best efforts of the mechanisms of Power" (n 7).

Teachers need to be watchful, self-reflexive, and open, to determine the best ways to promote an awareness of these partial articulations of classroom subjectivities within these mechanisms of power. The teaching of writing gives many of us that opportunity. And student resistance to institutional power forms a site where the political becomes manifest. Before I turn to laptops and student resistance to them—the specific political site I imagine—I want to examine a discussion of computers and student resistance to see the slippery nature of power when it comes to new technology.

Marilyn Cooper and Cynthia Selfe (1990) do a Bakhtinian reading of student resistance as evidenced in asynchronous computer discussions. This resistance is:

simply the necessary counterpoint to accommodation in dynamic social systems. Through resistance, individuals identify their needs and values and, hence, bring about the possibility of change in social systems. By encouraging students to resist in academic forums, we recognize and authorize them as members within the educational system, with as much right and need to initiate change as any of us. (851)

There seems to me to be a contradiction in the dictum to "encourage student resistance." It is up for grabs whether the sites of student resistance are immediately co-opted by such easy acknowledgements of the place of student resistance by Cooper and Selfe. It is the act of resistance you never see coming that sets a teacher back as Wells and others describe so vividly (see chapter 4: Wells, Dixon, Winkelmann). The way they want to get at these discourses that flow through resistance to produce change is to find specific academic forums that permit student resistance. Their choice in the late 1980s was the computer conference, where students could, as the authors say: "let us in on some of the things they talk about under their breath" (848). The type of computer conferencing they discuss has quickly been superseded by listservs, MOOs and MUDDs, and writing environments like Daedalus, WebCt, and Syllabase, among others. Cooper and Selfe's attempt to theorize a more democratic environment for students to express their desires has not come to pass. Conventional wisdom now states that the inequalities of face-to-face (f2f) classrooms (those of class, race, and gender biases) are replicated in computer-mediated communication (CMC) environments.

As I've describe in the previous discussion of my classroom listserv, if these inequalities are not directly replicated there is certainly a high level of uncertainty about what will become salient in a networked classroom discussion. For Faigley (1992) a flame war broke out in his networked classroom. My experience was much more positive as I've said. But you can be sure, that technology in the classroom brings uncertainty if nothing else. What I've been trying to do in this chapter is to map this uncertain ground.

What seems to be changing for technology-rich educational environments is the context for reading and writing, the very nature of literacy. So it may be true that the old inequalities are reinscribed, but it also means that there will be new ways arising to deal with these inequalities within the very (networked) classrooms that seem so strange to us now. For as we've seen, power constructs subjectivities in erratic ways that generate resistance *and* possibilities. In what follows I want to explore the new networked/laptop classroom for its dangers and for its possibilities for both students and teachers.

ThinkPad® U

During Spring, 1999, Fall semester I visited a local all-laptop college campus to observe a colleague's first year writing course. The first thing students do when they enter such classrooms is to open their IBM ThinkPad® laptops and hook them into the school's local area network (LAN).

The laptop used by students is the IBM ThinkPad® 380XD with a 233 MHz Pentium II processor, a 3.2 GB hard drive, and a CD-ROM drive. The system includes Windows 98, Microsoft Office 2000 suite (includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint, FrontPage, and Access), Microsoft Outlook 2000 e-mail, Internet Explorer and Netscape Communicator Web Browsers, and weighs 7.2 lbs. The fee to lease this computer, per semester, for a full-time student, is \$480. The fee is prorated for part-time students. The campus is fully wired, so students can access the LAN and the Internet from almost anywhere on campus. The college also provides high-speed modems for dial-in connectivity.

The college was one of the first, if not the first "ThinkPad® U." They began offering students laptops in 1993. Since that time the college has provided five different upgrades. Each one of these previous ThinkPad® models is proudly displayed in a trophy-like case outside the college's administration offices, evidence that the laptop is iconic of more than school spirit, since there is a certain corporate aura about this display consequent on the prominent placement of the IBM logo in the case.

The constant refrain in publicity and on the college's web site is that the laptops give students a substantial edge in finding a job. The accompanying rhetoric tends to emphasize the laptop as a matrix of skills that appeal to future employers. Here is a sample of the language visitors can expect when they log on to the college's web site:

Our students can't afford to sit back and let the future pass them by. They want career-oriented degrees that teach them to use the newest technologies—in the classroom, on the job, and at home. . . . [The] ultimate goal with this [laptop] initiative has been to provide our students with the technology skills or "techno-savvy" to minimize any technology learning curve they encounter. That means they can quickly adapt to and master new technologies as they become available.

This discourse encourages students to learn to operate the technology as opposed to the more difficult task of learning to use technology to accomplish some goal or to create new knowledge. Are students persuaded by this instrumental hype which encourages the construction of student bodies as mere

operators? The freshman composition classroom I visited showed me there was more going on than dutiful compliance to the college's corporate/educational rhetoric.

Laptops in the Writing Classroom

While I waited for my colleague to begin the instruction in her Comp I class, I sat back and watched her students, arrayed four to a table, their rapt faces just visible above the backs of the raised lids of their laptops. The class hadn't started yet and most had all their attention on the screen. Questions started to flood my mind. What was going on? What are writing teachers up against as these new technologies are foisted on them and their students? How are students embracing and resisting these technologies, and how can writing be taught when it must be done so differently? I continued to watch my colleague's students throughout the class period hoping that some of the answers to these questions would be forthcoming.

One thing I was quick to realize was the laptop computer issued to every student at this university is not only used for class work, it has become integral to students' social lives. Students get reminders of gatherings, make dates, and confirm appointments, all by e-mail. They can't wait to e-mail and check e-mail, so they can hear the latest. Most students check their e-mail several times a day and some as often as 10 times a day.

Students also e-mail their professors to catch up on an assignment or clarify a point that was made in class. Instructors' messages to students deal mostly with practical issues having to do with a missed assignment or a missed class. There are few philosophical discussions with students via e-mail, at least not in the experience of the teachers I've spoken with. "I've tried to initiate some deeper discussion of issues

surrounding assignments," one teacher explains, "but students won't respond." My colleague notes that she spends one to two hours a day answering students' e-mails. That sounds conservative, but I tend to think it's right in her case because she's the kind of teacher who has gotten very good at writing quick, succinct messages back to students. After all, e-mail rhetoric is known to be clipped, quick, and to the point.

Near the end of the hour, my colleague let me ask her students some questions. I wanted to know what these students did on their laptops during class that did not deal directly with the work of the class. Several mentioned that they did e-mail, ICQ [an on-line synchronous chat protocol], surfed the Web, and played games. Others said they e-mailed other students in the class *during* class. This latter practice seemed like an update of the jr. high school diversion of "passing notes" in class.

I admit to being curious about the content of these e-mails, much like Cooper and Selfe, when they say they are interested in what students are saying "under their breath." I just don't have the same confidence that students can mediate this discourse without teachers. But I was anxious to see what they would do if this writing "otherwise" came to influence their learning. I continued to ask questions and listen while these students talked to me about their experiences using laptops.

One student who mentioned that he did in-class e-mail said as a justification that he also e-mails or receives e-mail from classmates who are asking for clarification of a point the professor has just made. It's more likely that students e-mail each other when they find the instruction particularly boring; or, since these are Upper Midwesterners they use e-mail for back-channel talk because they're too polite to talk "out of turn" and thus

disturb the class. Yet, most teachers and some students I talked to thought surreptitious student e-mailing was disruptive.

Some older than average students complained that other (younger) students' in-class gaming and e-mailing was a nuisance. Such students, they said, should be paying attention to the teacher. These complaints might center around a classmate's constant flickering screen or the sounds that accompany game playing, or merely the sound of constant typing near to them. There is no doubt the ubiquitous nature of computers in the classroom will need some getting used to. To this end the college encourages teachers to find ways to use the laptops in their curriculum. And it's not as if teachers have no control over in-class computer use. They do. But all laptops all the time creates a culture that subverts teacher control. The LAN is the major communication link in that new culture.

The LAN

Students' laptops are nothing without the university's local area network (LAN). Some teachers have cracked down on students for being on the LAN during the class period. Some teachers have been known to slam laptop covers down on typing student fingers, a 21st century version of whacking students' knuckles with a ruler. Usually students are merely told to "unplug" from the LAN at the beginning of class. The plugs are prominently displayed since the connect boxes are right on the top of the tables. This permits teachers to stand at the front of their classroom and observe those still connected and remind them to disconnect. Nag might be a better word. But sometimes that doesn't help. Scowling at them doesn't help. Nothing helps. Part of the growing classroom

"lore" (in Stephen North's terminology) around laptops is that students are not even embarrassed anymore about "playing" on their computers. It's true that there are still some students who believe that e-mailing or ICQing is shameful or dishonest during instruction, but more and more it's what's done. Certain teachers simply ignore this behavior thinking that students have the choice to learn or not. Others turn away from it in frustration and disgust, choosing to discipline students. They say the technology has made a "monster," and it's all downhill from here. But I'm not so sure.

While I observed my colleague's class, two students beside me were "playing" on their computers while she taught. One was opening menus, fiddling with settings. The other, against the teacher's orders, was still on the LAN (well after the class began), probably using ICQ. When I asked him what he was doing at the end of the hour, he said he was "saving it." Not quite the answer to my question. Then I asked, as innocently as possible: "Saving your notes from class"? "Yes," he replied, matter-of-factly. A few minutes later, while he and his friend were readying their things to go, the friend spoke up: "Took a lot of good notes, eh"? The guilty one replied: "I was relaxing, listening to the discussion."

With such students, it's hard to know whether they were ever actually listening to the teacher or not, and what it means nowadays for students to "pay attention" in class. Multitasking has become a way of life for these students. And computers have assumed wide cultural implications for students and teachers. Some evidence of just such implications for teaching and learning were suggested as I continued to pay attention to the student who had remained on the LAN.

I happened to notice that he had a picture of the school's football team as a screen save. By the look of him, he was a member of the team. When I asked him about the picture and if he was in it, he pointed himself out to me. I wondered out loud whether they were going to make each person's head "active," so people could click on them to get more information (i.e., wt., year in school, hometown, major, etc). He didn't know, but he thought someone on the team was working on it. He and his fellows are not the football players I used to know when I was his age.

I consider this student's behavior—staying on the LAN—as an act of resistance. I am not surprised that he made only a minimal attempt to hide his violation of the rules. But I am intrigued by his chutzpah and whether it can be theorized in any productive way. For this I turn to several composition theorists and their ideas about student resistance.

Student Resistance

In her essay, "Marxist Ideas in Composition Studies" (1991), Patricia Bizzell describes resistance as an "impediment to the flow" of power. She says: "Resistance is a natural part of classroom behavior." Furthermore, it's not that students or teachers have control of this flow; it just *is*, as Foucault has taught us. Bizzell reads student classroom resistance by way of Henry Giroux's Marxist critique of education. Behavior can only be called resistance, he says, if it shows signs of surfacing out of "oppression and exploitation," experienced as they are by the person oppressed. This behavior produces action which "springs initially from anger, boredom, despair, or other painful emotions aroused in students and teachers by institutional education" (61). My football player acted resistantly quite possibly because he was bored, but could he be considered exploited?

Perhaps. But his exploitation had a sort of remedy (Could this be the action of Derrida's *pharmakon*?). The laptop—and writing—allowed him to creatively redirect his frustration and boredom. But there is another problem: students who resist tend to fail in traditional classrooms.

Giroux says that acts of student resistance may be reasonable, but at the same time students need “to distance themselves from the limiting aspects of the [resistant] behavior” (61-62). We could say then, that in the network classroom, if students are “left to their own devices”—using their laptops to act and write “otherwise”—many will not achieve the goals we have for them in our classes. But is it as easy as Giroux would have us believe for students to achieve this “distancing” effect, even if they wanted to, which their very resistance seems to preclude? I believe teacher goals can be maintained in face of student resistance.

Lynch and Jukuri (“Beyond Master and Slave: Reconciling Our Fears of Power in the Writing Classroom”) complicate Giroux's argument when they contend that there are two equal and opposing forces working to produce resistance in the classroom. One force is the fear of domination: students are told by those on the Right to fear strong-minded teachers who will turn them into amoral radicals. The other force working to produce resistance is the fear of exploitation: Students are cautioned by those on the Left that “prevailing standards and conventions of discourse, institutionally maintained and reproduced, are ‘loaded’ in the favor of those who are already most privileged” (276). Yet teachers, the guardians of middle-class values, are often accused of being spokespeople for this privilege. Students who fear being dominated often remain trapped

in their own rebellious actions, while other students refuse to see that they are exploited at all. These two responses reveal on the whole, examples of "forms of power," which Lynch and Jukuri say "divide us from others because they restrict the field of action before we begin to take action in it." They go on to say that what is needed are "relations of power [which] connect us with any number of other people because, when [quoting Foucault] 'faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up' ("The Subject and Power")" (281). How this "field of responses" opens up is not clear, as it is not clear for Giroux how students "distance" themselves from negative behavior consequent to resistance. But it might be enough to merely know it exists. Lynch and Jukuri try to explain this opening onto a "clearing" by referring to a mysterious "gestalt switch," that can reveal the possibilities of relations of power. That is, if teachers allow their students the "ability to act and invent— *which is the only check we have on one's own power [read teacher's power] being merely a forceful extension of a form of power*" (281), then teaching can become more flexible and students can feel a sense of freedom within the forms teachers suggest for learning.

Circles

To illustrate this freedom within restraint I want to relate an experience I had some years ago while visiting a friend who was working in the Chicago housing projects as an organizer. One Sunday, we were invited to an African-American Pentecostal church. I noticed on entering the church that we were the only white people there. I also saw an enormous collection of musical instruments in the sanctuary—snare, bass, kettle and side drums, clappers, cymbals, triangles, tambourines, guitars, an electric piano, and a

vibraphone. Among the instruments, the drums stood out—red and glittery. When the church filled, the service started. Or I should say, the music and the singing started. It was thunderous. And to make it more exciting, the voices of the purple-robed choir were literally drowned out by the singing from the congregation. Many in the congregation had gotten to their feet and were singing at the top of their lungs. That's when I noticed two very sedate, tuxedo-clad gentlemen wearing white gloves. They were standing in the aisle at the back of the church. When the music started, they began to walk down the aisle, and as they did, they scanned the parishioners. I saw them pause and fix their eyes two rows in front of us. There was a young woman whose movements to the music had begun to cause her to gyrate dangerously out of control. The two men came toward her. She seemed to sense their presence—I hardly know how since she was *in* the music. She sang deliriously as her body gravitated toward the aisle. There she began to lose total control of herself. The men "caught" her. And when I say "caught," I mean they gripped one another's white-gloved hands, encircling her, and let her thrash about between them in a religious ecstasy, holding her in the cage of their outstretched arms, protecting her from harm.

I see now that there was a relationship of power between those men and that woman, between the woman and her passion, the music, and the spirit. The white-gloved men remained calm and unaffected by the music and by the ecstasy of those in the pews. The image of white-gloved men suggests to me that they are like the best teachers. Such teachers let students ricochet off the walls, all the while holding them in bounds by the forms they teach. Such teachers don't hold their students to steady

them but to provide momentary and constant force to sustain them when it seems they will fall.

One way to hold students in what I suggest can be a creative bond is by way of the burgeoning classroom technology, technology such as the listserv I spoke of earlier and the laptop computers here. Computers let students loose into a world virtual but bounded. The machine becomes a second home. Computers are like the drums in that Pentecostal church—flashy, extravagant tools which are able to fill the entire horizon with music and “noise,” creativity and nonsense—depending on your skill and attitude.

Right now, the pleasure (their desire in Susan Wells’s rhetoric) our students feel when they are using their computers “otherwise” in our classrooms either doesn’t matter to teachers at all or makes us angry. We might observe that what they say and write behind our backs, under their (e-)breath, or right in front of us is evidence of the boredom and anger they feel for the work they are forced to do at college. The things they do otherwise on their laptops as we talk about revision or paragraphs or semicolons are contra-practices they do in order to be more creative and individualistic. I want to argue that what students do behind their laptop screens are new forms of creativity that in turn provide new teaching opportunities. And these teaching opportunities come about when teachers understand this new electronic culture and its norms, a culture students have a head start at accessing.

La Perruque

One way to look at the material forms—the writing—this resistance creates in the networked classroom is to view the writing in the context of popular culture. Michel de

Certeau uses an untranslatable French word: *la perruque*, literally "the wig" to name this phenomenon of practical resistance. He defines *la perruque* as "the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer." I quote him at length from his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

Accused of stealing or turning material to his own ends and using the machines for his own profit, the worker who indulges in *la perruque* actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit. In the very place where the machine he must serve reigns supreme, he cunningly takes pleasure in finding a way to create gratuitous products whose sole purpose is to signify his own capabilities through his *work* and to confirm his solidarity with other workers or his family through spending his time in this way. (25-26)

"To signify his own capabilities . . .!" How does the writing our students do "otherwise" signify their capabilities? How can we encourage this writing to be funneled into the work of the class? One might say that half the pleasure of their surreptitious e-mailing, for instance, is the resourceful way it is pulled off. But as I've said, this behavior doesn't contribute to the goals of the class (pace Giroux), and it puts students in a one-down position in respect to the teacher's authority and duty to establish goals for and to evaluate student work. But there is no question that there is an artful guile to these performances as the football player I described earlier illustrates. *There ought to* be a way this writing can be utilized by the teacher for the writing class.

As teachers, we need what de Certeau calls a "new order of things":

The actual order of things is precisely what "popular" tactics turn to their own ends, without any illusion that it will change any time soon. Though elsewhere it is exploited by a dominant power or simply denied by an ideological discourse, here order is *tricked* by art. (27)

The "here" he talks about is the action of the worker when he is involved in *la perruque*. Perhaps it is futile to think of such classroom behavior turned to a teaching moment. These signs of resistance, caught this way, are inevitably transformed and perhaps deformed in the process of recognition and authorization. But since the primary concern of the writing classroom is student writing, the writing students do "otherwise" on their laptops is fair game for the wily teacher who can put her arms around their writing just tight enough to let it flow but not tight enough to cut it off.

But might all this looping of arms around careening student writers be so much utopian blather? Students never get that worked up about anything anymore, so why should teachers bother to learn to instruct them on computers which are no more than toys to them? I would reply that teachers ignore their students' activities on computers at their peril. Teachers should observe student resistance to education as it is magnified by computer use and then help channel this resistance to make the classroom more of a community of learners. In this way teachers allow students to take advantage of how they—the students—learn differently. Jacques Derrida, in a conversation on modern pedagogy in *JAC*, says this: Modern students are "not less intelligent, but their intelligence is applied differently" (Olson 6). I would suggest the teacher's role in an approach to teaching that observes how students learn differently is to

encourage a student to be self reflective in regards this difference, especially as it applies to his or her behavior while using electronic technology.

And what teachers especially must be warned against is to not let the technology disappear—stripped of its rhetoric and its identifications—into a functional set of tasks. We must constantly remind students (and ourselves) about what Donna Haraway calls “the politics of the interface.” Within every assignment a writing teacher gives students, there should be an element of critique. Allow resistant behavior, but let students report back from these excursions like the auto-ethnographers (Pratt) they can be taught to be. Make the rules of the classroom reflect multitasking behavior and critique its value. Finally, let the class investigate the changing nature of the work they are doing and will be made to do when “all laptops all the time” become *the* cultural norm and not just a selective example of educational/corporate wish fulfillment.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DREAM, THE CYBORG, AND THE STUDENT

Introduction

My only advantage as a reporter is that I am so physically small, so temperamentally unobtrusive, and so neurotically inarticulate that people tend to forget that my presence runs counter to their best interests. And it always does. That is one last thing to remember: *writers are always selling somebody out.* —Joan Didion (*Slouching Toward Bethlehem*)

I identify particularly with Didion's characterization of herself as "neurotically inarticulate." I am not so similar in other respects. I'm neither small nor unobtrusive, nor female, for that matter. In fact, people naturally clam up around me or they talk too much. As a reporter I'd either get nothing or reams. Something about my inarticulateness irritates people. I had a teacher once tell me during one of my regular conferences with him that he was tired of waiting for me to speak and to quit bothering him. Yet, by writing about him (here) I prove Didion's point—I've sold him out. But that's the trouble—what goes around comes around. I'm a teacher now and I'm sensitive about doing right by students. I would like to complicate what might be called a writer's (Didion's) "skill" at selling out those they write about. One way to do this is by telling stories on yourself. The work is to bring the personal to the social, political, and

historical. And I don't mean to do this to rationalize the personal or construct an identity politics for myself. If I'm aligned with any group, it is with composition teachers, but they are a notoriously heterogeneous group.

In this chapter, I intend to combine my narrative of a stutter's life with certain psychoanalytic, filmic, dystopian, and pedagogical narratives that loosely connect around the theme of rhetoric and technology. I am interested in constructing this *mélange* in order to discover what it is I have to teach students in the technology-driven writing classes. One basic thing I've learned is that you have to get used to error. And that error is moderated somewhat (not completely done away with by any means) within communities of active and interested individuals that have found good work to do and are committed to each other no matter what their differences.

Teaching and Error

I know from reading Susan Wells that all writing involves error. And I think that this is what Didion must be talking about, too. But I'm convinced that *teaching* also contains its share of error. In the listserv error occurred as a result of the noise generated by the discussion. I'm not looking to perfect a pedagogy so as to eliminate this error. That would be fool hardy. In fact, I want to cultivate teacher error. I want to encourage my students to see the classroom community as a place where risks are taken with ideas and where there is good work to be done together even though we often fail one another.

Obviously, the teacher's character and conduct have something to do with whether he is able to provide the correct atmosphere for learning. Didion's gender, stature, and

inarticulateness are rhetorical characteristics that persuade her interlocutors to view her as innocuous, benign, even trustworthy. A practice of self-reflexivity will help a teacher understand the character and conduct he brings to his teaching. In this chapter, I provide some idea of what kind of teacher I've become by investigating certain narratives that are important to my education *and* my teaching.

I've been both a teacher and a (graduate) student. At this point, I want to speak from a teacher's perspective, to gather from my background what might be available to help me teach writing in computer-mediated classrooms. I'm especially interested in teaching those whose skill level, physical make up, conduct, or personality disrupt the teacher norm, yet at the same time I am wary of committing myself to difficult students. I've developed this desire reading Robinson, Wells, Bizzell, and others in composition studies. I define the teacher norm as the top down, hierarchical, "banking concept," of education. "Current traditional rhetoric," "the five paragraph essay," and "skill and drill" are convenient terms from Composition Studies that go to describe "the norm." I don't want to appear to you to have transformed my teaching somewhere outside of these long-time paradigms of writing instruction. There is no outside. I don't mention these practices to merely dismiss them because they are not going away, but to acknowledge that I was taught under them and influenced by them.

I find that however progressive my theory is, it has trouble penetrating my practice. A portion of my research is focused on student resistance—a return of the repressed out of an unconscious that predates and covers over the norm. Yet, most students won't be so bold to show their resistance. In that case, I look for other evidence

of students' need to disrupt the norm. As I've shown in the previous chapter, computer-mediated writing instruction gives some avenue for student resistance.

The source of my unease with teaching and with technology center around questions about what I might have to offer to students. I hope it is not simply to make them write what I want them to write, so they assimilate to the wishes of the institution. I want to be the kind of teacher who can step unobtrusively into the gap that students feel exists between speech and writing.

In this chapter, I talk about what has contributed to my becoming a composition teacher, and a composition teacher who is interested in technology. It is an attempt to be self-reflexive about the education I have had, so that I can see the teacher I have become. I use education in a broad sense, life education, social training, training we get in family. I've not been rigorous in a sociological or psychological sense in my exposition. I hope to fashion a rhetoric of teacher practice for myself from the shards of my past and my education, observations, and my reading. I wish to embody the position of writing teacher and learn to persuade my students toward their capacities for learning and freedom.

My Father Freud

Freud's Wolf Man helped get me my first academic job. At my interview for a position in the English department at Millersville University, the search committee asked me to say something about the high points of my intellectual development. They were asking me how was it that I came to be a college teacher? I first knew that I wanted to be a college teacher in Ed White's 650 class (Critical Theory) at Cal State. On that occasion, I read a short paper to the class about my first exposure to Theory. In this paper I told the

story of reading Freud's *Wolf Man* case as an undergraduate late one night. When I fell asleep, I dreamt my *own* variant of the Wolf Man dream and became my own critic. I got a big laugh from my fellow students. I felt for the first time in my life like a stand-up comedian. On the way home I told myself: this is for me.

It has been difficult over the years of graduate school for me to recover this first recognition that humor gives the serious work we do with students. Our life stories as teachers can help our students see that what they may currently consider mundane may be the greater part of the material they will come to collect to make meaning for themselves.

The Teacher as Analysand

How can the teacher be assimilated to the psychoanalyst? It is exactly the contrary which is the case: the teacher is the person analyzed. —Barthes (382)

Roland Barthes's characterization of the teacher as analysand has the ring of truth. He writes perceptively about teaching and students in his 1977 essay, "Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers." I would like to follow his idea of the teaching as analysand in regard to my story of the Wolf Man.

The Wolf Man was a young Russian aristocrat who came to Freud in the years before WW1 with a severe anxiety neurosis. Freud's analysis of this man's dream makes an important contribution to psychoanalysis. In the dream there were five or six white wolves in a tree outside his bedroom window. The dream terrifies him, and he wakes up calling for his nurse. The details of Freud's analysis does not interest me as much as the way Freud writes about his patient and his dream.

Yet I want to go a bit further into Freud's actual case to illustrate a relationship between the Wolf Man as patient and my own career as teacher. And it is not so much the details of my own case—you'll be glad to know that I'm not going to reveal any peccadilloes—as Freud's response to the material pushed up by the *Wolf Man* that interests me.

In the comparison between a teacher and the patient in psychoanalysis, if Barthes's analogy is right, Freud plays the part of the student. In this case, he would definitely be an exceptional student. Barthes acknowledges this in his essay when he denies that students can hold such a role (as the analyst) mainly because teachers distrust all student responses (383). Perhaps the "class" stands in for the analyst? The Wolf Man learns to trust Freud because of the dream Freud helps him analyze.

In the case of *Wolf Man*, Freud tries to determine what was real and what was fantasy for his patient. At the beginning of his text reconstructing the case (*The Wolf Man*) he tells his readers:

Something new can only be gained from analyses that present special difficulties, and to the overcoming of these a great deal of time has to be devoted. (402)

Freud was intent on giving this case the time it needed because he had expectations that it would be important. In his introduction to the *Wolf Man*, he says that a single case "might teach us everything, if we were only in a position to make everything out, and if we were not compelled by the inexperience of our own perception to content ourselves with a little." As the hero of his own piece, he tells us the case he is about "to discuss left

nothing to be desired," It was so transparent only because he was able to "behave as 'timelessly' as the unconscious itself" (402). Yet, this timeless therapy had particular stages.

The Wolf Man's treatment moved through these specific stages: 1) the man's "obliging apathy," 2) "a long education . . . [when he took on] an independent share of the work," which provided some relief but also permitted him "to remain comfortably in the situation," and, 3) the time when "his attachment to myself had become strong enough," so that Freud could then put a time limit to hasten treatment. So much for the timelessness of the unconscious, even Freud had to finish and move on.

Of particular interest is Freud's elaboration on this third stage: "Under the inexorable pressure of this fixed limit his resistance and his fixation to the illness gave way, and now in a disproportionately short time the analysis produced all the material which made it possible to clear up his inhibitions and remove his symptoms" (403). We presume that the Wolf Man was successfully treated as Freud describes, but his recovery does not preclude the Wolf Man from getting sick again or for new symptoms to manifest themselves. But the effects of a successful analysis were not in question, what concerned Freud for most of the study was to isolate the causes of the man's neurosis and determine their universality. Freud worked backward from the symptoms to the primal cause(s) of the neurosis.

The Analysis

Freud's process of analysis and discovery with the Wolf Man is similar to the analysis and discovery writing teachers go through with a class: the teacher approaches

student papers with "obliging apathy," then after "a long education" reading student papers, he gains attachments to his students, and because the term expires so quickly, he tries near the end to come up with a sense of what went on in the course for him and his students. It is only in a case like the listserv I analyzed in the previous chapter or my experience with Jay that the teacher has the time or energy to examine the teaching situation and not be content "with a little." Theory's promise has always been to be more like a self-reflective practice. Freud's attempts to affect practice occur when he writes out the case history of the Wolf Man. I'm determined to learn from him. I want to learn "what is real" in my confrontation with Jay by writing it out. I want to isolate the causes of my own anxiety with him and recognize what needs to be articulated between a student like Jay and myself. I believe Freud's work in this case can shine a light on this endeavor.

Briefly, Freud determines that the root of the Wolf Man's neurosis is sexual in nature and results from the trauma of viewing his parents in the sexual act. The "activation of the scene" (Freud purposely avoids the word "recollection" [414]) begins at age 1½ for the Wolf Man, reoccurs represented by the wolves-in-the-tree dream at age 4, and continues to affect him into adulthood (his 20s), where it surfaces under Freud's analysis. The dream the man has of the wolves in the tree is the material Freud uses to connect the primal scene to his patient's adult anxieties. Freud explains in his analysis of the dream that the Wolf Man's "fear of his father was the strongest motive for his falling ill, and his ambivalent attitude towards every father-surrogate was the dominating feature of his life as well as of his behavior during treatment" (407). From the man's insistence that the dream felt real, Freud deduces that indeed some actual event had provoked it—an

event now forgotten but of sufficient power to produce the frightening aspect of the wolves in the dream.

Just as Freud analyzes and treats the fears of the Wolf Man, teachers can reflect on their own fears which emanate from teaching situations. If the work of treatment is to allay the Wolf Man's fears, then as teachers and spokespersons for the Law (Barthes 380), we need to examine our fears of students and the ways they retard the work of the class. I've shown that the use of technology has a way of defusing the issue of authority but not getting rid of it. In fact, the questions about authority may be displaced to areas that are even less accessible to critique by students or teachers. That is why the problem of authority must be part of the work of the class. The discourses of power are always rhetorical in nature and it takes pinning them down and then letting them up to see where they have influence next. Freud, for instance, is never satisfied with his own analysis of the Wolf Man's motives because he knows there is always more going on.

Freud is keenly aware that the interpretation of the Wolf Man's dream arrives tainted because the forms the primal material had to go through to reach the analysis phase. This tainting is like the "error" Susan Wells talks about and like the progression through forms that we saw in the listserv in the previous chapter. He says that any understanding of

the sexual development of the case that we are examining has a great disadvantage from the point of view of research, for it was by no means undisturbed. I was first decisively influenced by the seduction, and was then diverted by the scene of observation of the coitus, which in its deferred action operated like a second seduction. (416)

Freud does not despair of these facts as much as he feels that "these scenes from infancy are not reproduced during the treatment as recollections, they are the products of construction" (419). But this seems to be a revision of his earlier claim that the primal scene had to actually have happened. But he is also, throughout this section, defending himself from the charge that he influenced the Wolf Man to think the primal scene *was* real. He scoffs at this charge (leveled by unnamed critics) saying it is far too complicated for him to have concocted the analysis(es) for the man. Near the end of the case description, he forestalls any final conclusion by first explaining that the scene of coitus between the man's parents could have resulted from viewing "copulation by animals" (424), and then he says unabashedly on the last page: "I intend on this occasion to close the discussion of the reality of the primal scene with a *non liquet* ("It is not clear"—a legal term).

The secret to Freud's wavering diagnosis is his conviction that the scene, however real it was, takes its power from the way the neurotic constructed it. The narrative of this constructing of symptom may never get resolved, or if it does it is resolved only tentatively. It's a language machine that spells anxiety and fear that has to be re-calibrated to spell out (with the same letters) a different story that can in time approach a narrative of trust and love.

I must have been particularly susceptible to the drama of the wolves when I was able that night in the critical theory class to reconfigure my own psychic material to fit the form of the Wolf Man's dream. At the time I made quite an effort to recall and write my dreams down. I remember that my entire family was portrayed in one form or other in the

dream. I especially recall my father standing around lazily under the tree with a straw hat on that was festooned with fishing lures. The dream didn't frighten me at all; if anything it was funny or at least peculiar. I was never afraid of my father as a child. I am convinced that what my re-dreaming did was allow me to gain some control as a reader of texts over the technology of the dream. I see my dream as a reader's response to Freud and now as a teacher's response to teaching. It gave me entrance into the world of theory and practice. And later in graduate school and again at my job interview I used it to authorize my expertise. I was proud of this uncanny act of reading that embodied my symptoms and allowed me to formulate them for the purpose of entering the world of the academy.

Machine Dreams

By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. (Haraway 373)

I have always admired Phillip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, from which the film, *Blade Runner*, was taken. Inside Dick's question-title is a benign, albeit disturbing notion: what happens if machines were merely "asleep" after we turn them off? What kind of sheep would they count in those ambient hours of machine restfulness?

I think humans would consider a machine's ability to dream a dangerous portent, a disturbing anomaly in the machine's program. That's because we're not used to machines thinking along with us, but thinking for us. And the thinking for us comes out in our reliance on them to enable *our* thinking, as if a machine could permit *us* to be better

thinkers. What seems to be happening, however, is that machines are providing us with more information to process. It is still up to us to process what the machines have gathered for us. Consciousness is our white man's burden when it comes to machines.

A conscious machine sets up a barrage of contradictions, the least of which is that humans have always desired, or desired others, to be in one way or other, more machine-like in their behavior—more efficient, healthy, harmonious, and productive. But machine consciousness would certainly be a blow to our egos. The crazed dystopia depicted in *Blade Runner* is a metaphor for the breakdown of human/machine capabilities within an increasingly machine-centered culture. And the key to this breakdown is the ambiguity of consciousness. Humans are able to think, but by this gift we know our mortality. What we want to do is to stop thinking and act more like a machine who can think only when it needs to. Deciding when to think is the problem. And this deciding is the nature of the work we do with and for each other.

Rachael and Deckard have an illuminating conversation on the topic of work early into the film.

Rachael: It seems you feel our work is not a benefit to the public.

Deckard: Replicants are like any other machine. They're either a benefit or a hazard. If they're a benefit, it's not my problem. (*Blade Runner* 1982)

In this snatch of dialogue, the Rachael character in *Blade Runner* innocently questions Deckard, the blade runner, killer of replicants, about why he does what he does, as if he's just a sophisticated kind of Orkin Man, routinely exterminating the wrong pests, instead of

killing renegade sentient beings who were constructed to do jobs no human could or would want to do. When I use this film in my composition classes, students are asked to engage the problems of our growing human-machine culture.

When I give students the above quotation from *Blade Runner*, I start by asking them who is the "public" Rachael is talking about. And is it as easy as asking after the "benefit" or "hazard" when it comes to dealing with these replicants? Rachel herself turns out to be the fly in this ointment—she's a replicant, too. Deckard regrets killing "skin jobs," but it's usually him or them. But when it comes to Rachael, the Other becomes somehow intimate, no longer foreign or disposable, instead it becomes precious. The Other becomes us. If we look at *Blade Runner* in terms of Haraway's essay, "Cyborg Manifesto," we see that the world of the film has become our world. (Science fiction is always about the present.) Haraway says we're all "fabricated hybrids of machine and organism." I believe the real problem in *Blade Runner* is represented as a failure to distinguish between "them and us." According to Haraway there are no more boundaries anymore; they've all been "breached" (375). The machine made us all into varieties of the same beast where no one can tell what the benefits and hazards are any more. It erased the natural categories of gender and the human. Or, has it? Many of my students in the last course in which I showed *Blade Runner* could not see that there were any gender issues in the movie. Not even when I pointed out that Pris (Daryl Hannah) was designated as a "standard pleasure model." It's Haraway's belief that gender has been more trouble than its worth—a hard notion for most first year students to pick up on. I believe we become different people when we attach ourselves to the machine, yet not so different that we don't have to explain ourselves to others and ourselves.

The Cyborg Next Door

The cyborg has become a common metaphor for anyone who is in some way integrated into a machine or functions as a part of a machine. The cyborg metaphor usually entails machine enhancements of human appendages or sensory organs. Or, someone could be seen as a cyborg if their bodily appendages or organs are replaced with a machine part because of disease or injury. My uncle who has two artificial knees is a cyborg. I imagine that he experiences little change in consciousness, although the knowledge that his knees are man made might make him think differently about his body. And that difference or possibility for difference is what Haraway theorizes.

Cyborgs especially have the opportunity to deconstruct the usual race, class, and gender roles. Cyborgs are a self-creating species. Of course, there are no guarantees that gender roles will be revised as *Blade Runner* illustrates. But one has the possibility of starting with a subjectivity that has not been constructed before hand. Machines enable a new birth, but humans still make all the decisions.

My ex-wife, Sue (a pseudonym), was in a good position to be a cyborg but never (as far as I know) fulfilled her promise. Ten years before I met her she had lost her leg in an automobile accident that left her with just enough of a stump to fit a prosthesis. She failed repeatedly to adapt to the prosthesis, returning again and again to walking with a pair of crutches.

I know it's problematic using my ex-wife as an example here. Only one of the problems is that she isn't here to defend herself. I do it because she mirrors my own struggle with stuttering. It is not surprising then that we were together. She provided a

different reaction to some of the same problems I experienced with my speech. I'll start by talking about what I received from the relationship—practice talking.

Don't let anyone tell you that a dysfunctional marriage where you quarrel all the time isn't good for something. We argued interminably. I had to defend myself verbally every day of my life. I was an uneasy audience for her failed desires as she was for mine. But I became a better speaker in the process. What she gained, I never learned. Yet the way she used or was used by technology connects concerns I have about technology to unable learning.

Unlike those extraordinary disabled people who walk across Canada on an artificial leg or rock climb with mechanical arms, Sue was no heroine in a made-for TV movie. She let her disability dominate her and turn a rather charming woman into a self-indulgent person. The sign of her missing leg was attached to the signifier of dis-ease that no manner of mechanics could pry loose. She rejected the rhetoric of the machine. The prosthesis was unnatural and beside the point to her real purpose and that was to have someone take care of her. The machine failed her because there was no work she needed it to help her do. Yet her dependence made her reject anyone or anything who tried to help her. The possibility that her walk might be augmented mechanically never seemed to be that important to her. She could never imagine herself as machine enabled.

Sue's rejection of the prosthesis doomed her to a life that unaccountably accentuated life-long patterns of dependence and shame. I had, on the other hand, consciously or not, always pursued various verbal prostheses for my stuttering and strove to be as normal as possible. In fact, I can see now that my first marriage acted as a virtual

prosthesis to force me to speak more normally. Our eventual divorce propelled me back to grad school to become a college teacher.

As a composition teacher interested in technology and education I'm interested in narratives of machine-enabled learning like the one I've just told about Sue and me. Many of these narratives start with trying to give those less advantaged an equal chance at access to new information or abilities by providing machines for them to use. But it isn't as easy as providing access to technology. Teachers have to learn ways of bridging the divides between students' material culture and new technology culture. One of those divides happen to be within the body itself, or, in concert with the body and the machine. You can't will a cyborg to power. The machine merely enables already purposeful work; it helps us work otherwise. There has to be a place for these machine-human hybrids to live and work.

Cyborg Bodies

Carol Winkelmann (1978) gives an impassioned testimony to the difficulties the cyborg has finding purposeful work even when we are committed to them and to their struggles. I explore her essay next because it closes in on my own preoccupation with machine learning. Her essay takes school-bound theory into the mundane and brings it back (to school), supercharged in the computer network. I admire the risks she takes and the knowledge she makes. It is not unremarkable that she was one of Jay Robinson's students.

Winkelmann begins her essay with a narrative introduction:

This is a tale, as well, about social relations enforced and mediated by technology and about how all the participants, including myself, had their

preconceived notions about Otherness techno-digested. My students and I never expected the events of this story to happen as they did; as you will see, technology created and disintegrated whole narratives of race, class, and gender. (4)

Winkelman describes her encounters with a woman by the name of Sheila from a woman's shelter where she volunteers. During their acquaintance Sheila agrees to tell her story to members of Winkelman's Women's Studies class. Her students "interact" with Sheila by e-mail in response to texts that Winkelman helps Sheila record and then transmit electronically to her students. In this way, Sheila is a cyborg, digitally represented for Winkelman's class of middle-class students. The purpose, Winkelman says, of these interchanges

between the shelter and university was a kind of electronically facilitated infidel heteroglossia: the rerouting of stories from Outsiders to Insiders. Both Sheila and I were invested in this process. It was the reason I sat with pencil poised and it was the reason she gave me her time. (8)

Her student interchanges provided a series of disconnects. It was hard for students to see Sheila as anything but a character in a real live drama. "They were no longer dealing with theory, but rather with a real person obviously struggling with the sociopolitical oppressions upon which the comforts of their (and my) middle-class life depend"(10). It was difficult for her students to respond except as outsiders.

And they had no way of interrupting her attempted suicide when it came. As with my ex-wife, machine-mediated existence didn't seem to matter when it came to mortality.

I believe Sheila's thoughts were elsewhere and so was her physical body, since she disappeared from the center soon after. Ultimately, the machine cannot save any of us.

Student exchanges in Winkelmann's on-line environment had no option for understanding the untimely cessation of Sheila's messages. Such texts live forever don't they? The purpose of becoming a cyborg is to cheat the material. Machines that want to kill themselves give us a chill that can't easily be worked out in an utopian universe. The computer-mediated communication tools could not protect anyone in Winkelmann's narrative from the usual fears that accompany life. It seems that Sheila's oppression persisted even on-line, although it did get transformed. But it was not transformed from worse to better, just from the same to different. Winkelmann confirms this approach to difference at the end of her essay:

I'd like to remind you that my essay is not primarily about improvement. Certainly, this is not a narrative about progress, though, in this postmodern age and as a progressive educator, I myself am holding out for utopian dreaming. Furthermore, this essay is not about permanence. Sheila has physically vanished. The seminar is over and all the participants are gone. Primarily, this essay is about a series of interruptions, outbursts, and interventions. It is about electronic communication and the interruption of communication because, whenever the stories of the marginalized get told in the middle class, the homogeneity of experience of lives gets interrupted. This is "a fissure in the ideology of the sameness, wholeness, unity of life in America (Haraway 199, 164-7). . . . I want all my students to know about

the problems of representation and a politics of articulation. I want them to understand the politics of writing and writing as politics. I want them and the women in the shelter to see the potential of writing as weaving, networking, affinity, and social action. (20)

In Winkelmann's "politics of articulation," the machine enables such metonymic configurations. But I would stress that there is also a rhetoric of articulation that influences and marks the politics Winkelmann talks about. We may not get access to the power that affirms and enables us because of the ways we and our fellows are articulated, but there are strategies that help propel significant changes in our present articulation *if* we can discover their sources.

In the next section, I present a failure in articulation in the wannabee-networked classroom. My students and I in the course I present rarely got past my appeal that they form a community much less bring that community on-line. Again, I'm anxious to see what I can bring to the classroom as teacher. I learned a hard lesson from one of my students that self revelation can be a risky move. It proves the adage: Humility is the last pride.

A Difficult Class

9-3-99

Had a long talk with Jay after class. He wanted to know how long I had stuttered. When I told him he asked me if being picked on as a child influenced me to stutter. I told him that it was a circular thing. (I thought it was a strange question. Is he scoping out the teacher?) His questions were in response to telling the class I stuttered. He put me on the spot. He also tried to

connect my occasional nervousness in class to my stuttering. The implication (I took) was that a good teacher controls his nerves because it interferes with the relay of information to the class—his idea of teaching (I guess). An interesting outcome of revealing something personal to a class of undergraduates. (I felt like I was on the witness stand or the analyst's couch) He said the reason he asked was that he liked to analyze others. Said with all sincerity. (If he knows certain things about me he's going to be better able to motivate, control, manipulate, cure me.) He evidently believes that this strategy will allow him to be a better leader—something he says he's particularly good at. Said with no apparent irony. (Why is he talking to me about leadership? Paper topic? hmmm. He pissed me off!) He bragged that he was part of all the most popular groups in hs. He evidently believes that his position as an elite insider gives him the license to "observe" others. (I never was in with the elites, unless it was elem. school where there was just 8 of us! Does that count? In hs. I was always the person in the down position looking at groups to join but knowing that I never could.)

—Archibald's Teaching Journal

The above excerpt comes from my teaching journal at the beginning of a college Writing for Research course I taught Fall 1999. I wrote it after a typical early class session where we were exchanging information about ourselves. I told them I stuttered, so my way of speaking (now) would have some context. I told students for two reasons. I had gotten

an anonymous remark on a student evaluation several semesters back that asked me to “stop all that stuttering” when I talked. Then, when I read a paper at a conference where I discussed my stuttering in terms of the academy’s perceived valuation of fast-talking, articulate people, several in the audience suggested I bring my stuttering up to students. Actually, at the point, the problem I was having was *not* with students but with *my* teachers and future colleagues.

At any rate, I don’t think my stuttering (in the classroom) is particularly obvious these days, not in comparison to when I was younger. Yet an anxious speaking moment can make me fumble with my words. Some people are more sensitive to my stammer than others. A colleague of mine after she visited my classroom exclaimed: “You don’t stutter when you’re up in front of students!” She didn’t see me on those days where I needed to confront Jay.

Roland Barthes says in his essay on teaching: “It sometimes happens, remnant of May ‘68, that a student speaks to a teacher in the familiar *tu* form, which gives us a strong, full sign, referring to the most psychological of signifieds: the will for militancy or mateyness—*muscle*” (391). Jay, the student I talk about above, was just such a student. He wished to flex his muscle in my classroom. For Jay, my stuttering was seen as a sign of weakness and an inability at coherent speech, a prerequisite for a teacher. And for Jay it became an opportunity to “get something” on the teacher. The rest of the students didn’t seem to care, or if they did, they never said anything.

My motivation for telling students about my stuttering was to give them more of an idea about the kind of person I am. I wanted them to see me as a person who

had overcome adversity and was able to achieve a modicum of success. A role model. I know this sounds dopey, but my mistake was that I didn't explain why I was talking about myself. What did it have to do with the class? One thing it did, at least for Jay, was to bring out his aggressive behavior which piqued my aggression. But by confronting him, I undermined my authority in the class. Not a bad thing normally, but we all want to have control over giving control away, don't we? It didn't help that the nature of a stutterer, even a "cured" stutterer, is to stutter even more if he is confronted with his stuttering and then to explode in anger.

I was put on the defensive every time I spoke to Jay in class or in-group. He tended to be outright rude to me. He would sit sideways (facing the window) during class sessions. Other times he would sit sullenly with his eyes closed or his head down. I started to teach to him and resented it. There were several instances during discussions where I got angry at him because his questions or answers indicated his contempt for me and what I was trying to teach.

He told me several times that he was interested in leadership and in analyzing others. He indicated he might want to write about leadership but when I mentioned it to him as a topic he brushed it off. My sense of this was that he didn't want to write about leadership as much as he wanted to be the leader of the class. As ridiculous as it seems I thought he wanted to lead some sort of insurrection against me. Some class members responded to this behavior by deferring to him, but certainly not everyone. There were several students who reacted negatively to his aggressive forays to gain control of the class. I speak in military terms because I felt he and I were combatants.

When we had discussions Jay would often be the only one to respond to my questions, so I was forced to deal with him. My anger toward him was probably obvious to the rest of the class, although I never made it a topic in class sessions. As the semester went on I felt so provoked by Jay that I confronted him one day with his attitude and suggested he drop the class. He denied that he had any sort of attitude or that he meant to provoke me in any way. He claimed *I* didn't like him. I learned later that my request for him to drop the class was proof for him that I didn't like him. Why was it even a question since we didn't *need* to like each other? But whether I liked him or not wasn't the reason I wanted him to drop the class. No teaching or learning was going on between us. The best way to resolve this situation was for him to resign the class. He refused. I never could understand why he kept coming to class. Men are always accused of dealing with stress by "fight or flight." He chose to stay and fight, although I have to say much of the "fighting" was carried on in a passive aggressive style. I started to call him my "alpha male" student. We were reduced to fighting for position in our little classroom community. For me this was painfully ironic since the theme I had picked for this course was community.

The course required my students to write about aspects of their national, home, and school communities. I gave them readings to spark their interest in the topic, but I have to say it was not a topic that any of them accepted with much excitement. The trouble I was having with Jay certainly colored my investment in the topic. I suppose the fact that I could not feel we were any sort of community might have been a perfect opportunity to talk about what makes a classroom community. But it never happened. I

know now we had to build that community and not just imagine it would naturally occur because I had convened the class. I frankly did not know how to bring the readings on community to bear on what we did as a class. Students' unwillingness to engage one another around the topic or to confront each other except in the most bland and inoffensive ways contributed to my reluctance. I believed that for the class itself to become a topic of our study, we would have to create texts together that we could interpret and analyze. There also needed to be a purpose for such an investigation except that of group navel gazing. Such an opportunity never came up.

It is clear that I had a certain agenda when it came to the topics I preferred to teach in the Writing for Research course. One semester I developed the course work around the topic "a sense of place" and another semester the topic was "literacy, technology, and culture." Teachers often subject their students to their own research interests. My frustration with these students and with the topic "community" had to do with my students' lack of general interest in the topics I chose. They had no curiosity about place, or tech-culture, or community. They had never seen these topics as problems to research and write about. They had never had to focus on them as ambivalent or conflictual sites. The failure was partially mine. I feel now that I had not taken time to convince them that these topics were valuable. I had not assumed I needed to be a rhetor in addition to being their teacher.

I always want the writing to spark student interest; the writing itself be a site to build knowledge and interest. But I could not seem to persuade this class that this sort of writing mattered. They were locked into thinking about my assignments as mere

assignments without any connection to their lives, without connection to their outside communities. I tried to make allowances for their interest within the general topic I chose for the course. I expected that if they were to write interesting, engaged essays they would have to take ownership of the papers they were writing, not only the language but the topic, too.

My goal when teaching is to enable this type of learning by giving students methods, so that they will be able to address any sort of problem with specific tools of the language. One tool I am particularly keen on giving them is access to computer-mediated environments in order to facilitate collaboration. And this clearly contributes to my interest in community. But when I take students into computer labs I still feel the conflict between maintaining classroom order and the *a priori* notion that good work follows the creation of a culture of assent. Teacher and students have to agree with one another because differences only retard a classroom community from forming or at the very least, balkanize it.

The conflict I experienced with Jay made me so anxious to establish community spirit in my classroom, that it froze my attention to the actual work of making community. I couldn't see that mere agreement or "making nice" wasn't the key to community. Could a writing classroom community full of people who do not get along with one another produce good writing together? Yes, if they can learn to verbalize their differences. But people have trouble working with people they don't like. Many college classrooms are susceptible to this failure because there isn't a pressing need for students to work together except as an exercise toward a grade.

What type of teacher rhetoric could be employed that would allow for controversy but not freeze out productive work?

I have learned that a teacher's desire for students to follow a certain track, even if it is only that of the necessity to change can backfire. Everyone I know is made up of varying amounts of resistance and accommodation. We want to be part of the social body, but we also strive to renounce our ties to the social when the fear of the group becomes to large and we are confronted with a loss of our identity and our autonomy. We experience "fight or flight," but we also cling to our friends and family to get us through crisis.

I don't apologize for the way I approach this problem. I hate the "fight or flight" response. I want people to get together in harmonious groups like classrooms of students and do good work. I recognize that they must be persuaded to do this work together despite whether they get along with one another or not. I'm committed to the work of teaching and learning. I choose to look at the trouble that develops (Jay) as a problem in failed rhetoric. I don't think that technology, for instance, is a cure for this trouble. It reinscribes many of the "asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt), but it also provides a certain speed of communication and added "noise" that can provide more space for resistance and change. What I want to begin to understand in this chapter is the role teacher desire has in what I want to call, after Bill Readings (1996), a "rhetoric of dissensus." It's not that I want to fix my dysfunctional relationship with the Jays of the world. I want to interject a third term (Barthes 388)—a gear change, a buffer, a translator, an adaptor—so the class can pick the problem up as work they can engage. I

want to be able to move the discussion toward a community relationship that does not ignore our debts to one another but at the same time cannot brook those who would silence us.

Outbursts

I feel slightly reticent writing about the problem I had with Jay. I've decided to analyze my confrontation with Jay and critique it as a pedagogical moment that reduces my identity to that of a teacher who happens to . . . do and be a lot of things. In what follows, I employ Composition theorists Susan Wells and Kathleen Dixon, who have both written about difficult students, to help me interrogate my own relationship with my difficult student, Jay. I think what I have to say is useful for teachers of every stripe who must confront those students who, for whatever reason, have decided not to be well behaved in our classrooms.

I also understand my confrontations that semester with Jay as a series of outbursts in the way Kathleen Dixon theorizes them:

An *outburst* is a moment when the often latent conflicts among faculty and among students, between students and faculty, or within individuals bubble to the surface, erupting in class discussions, small-group work, office-hour conversations, conference presentations, or e-mail conferencing. An *outburst* is a response to a conflict that expresses a person's orientation to that conflict and to the social and political conditions that underlie it (xi)

My orientation, as an older than average GTA with a latent speech impediment, gave Jay a way of pricking the skin of my well-cultivated distance with students. My experience with Jay was liminal in the way Dixon says that outbursts are “not reducible to mere expressions of ‘resistance’ to ‘oppression’” (xi). My experience with Jay got me thinking about my teaching and the way I appear to students but left me poised for something else. It gave me at least one reason to write this chapter of my dissertation. I want to understand the difficult position in which I found myself with Jay. In my confrontations with him, I had started to relive some of the feelings of shame and self-pity from my early schooling. It made me angry—angry enough to lash out at him and to lose control of myself, another sort of thing teachers ought not to do.

When Dixon talks about outbursts she asks whether they are “good things” and whether they can be “articulated within a larger perspective.” She wonders whether they may be “inevitable” because our society is presently in a “veritable hothouse of desire for outbursting.” I take my own classroom experience with Jay as an example of what she means and join with her when she says: “We must study the conditions of the outbursts and their consequences so that we can patch together a public rhetoric for our times,” of the “agitated public rhetoric of the times.”

I wonder who will be the audience for the critique we make of our tales of classroom outbursts? Dixon names “progressive teachers” (ix) as her audience for *Outbursts*. Such Composition teachers especially want to know whether a theory of outbursts can help to inform practice. I know I do. Integral to the way theory

evolves from practice is what Dixon means when she says: "I want to bring theory into talk about the personal—frequently stories of tribulation and victimization" (48). She theorizes this desire when it comes to her own teaching of graduate courses in her essay in *Outbursts*, "Revisiting White Feminist Authority." At the beginning of the section, "Grad Girl Gangs," she says:

I view graduate courses differently than undergraduate courses, as places where I can take some pleasure in being an intellectual. And yet, reflection on this vignette shows that, unlike the guys of the previous story, I am perhaps not aggressive enough in making claims to my own rights to pleasure in public spaces. (57)

Thus begins what feels like a cautionary tale about thwarted teacher desire, a desire Dixon expresses openly to her graduate class. It is her desire that they join in lively intellectual debate with their teacher. Not a bad desire as desires go. I had a different desire when it came to Jay. I wanted him to hear me and respond to me as his teacher.

My outbursts with Jay centered on a desire to be seen as a capable teacher. My ideas were not at stake as much as my ability to speak those ideas. I lost Jay because I couldn't figure out a way to recoup the energy expended in the outburst. My authority peaked at the outburst. My feeling of helplessness before Jay centered around my lack of authority to persuade him to accept me as his teacher. One reason why this happened was because I revealed I was vulnerable. It is a tricky strategy for a rhetorician to reveal his vulnerability. Strength usually is the best way to build character and solidarity with your

audience. Weakness comes after establishing character, after strength, and not before. But how do you have a lively, intellectually provoking, and mutually stimulating conversation with students if you are always the teacher?

Intransigent Students

Susan Wells doesn't do any better job (then me), given the tale she tells of classroom dysfunction in her chapter: "Giving an Ordered History: Narrative in the Discourse of the Classroom." She says classrooms are filled with the "discourses of modernity," her chief subject of study in *Sweet Reason*. Even her own. And its true, she says, that "my own classroom operates through exclusion, transgressive desire, and contradictory aspirations to rationality" (195). She tells the story of Andrea, her "most intransigent student." She tells us the story of Andrea and her, "not as a model of teaching practice, but to honor the demand Andrea made by taking up her unsparing reflection on education" (195).

Wells and the other students in her women's studies course she teaches have a series of raw confrontations with Andrea. It begins when Andrea criticizes another student's report for "systematically ignor[ing] the fierceness of oppression among the very poorest [women], including especially her [Andrea's] experience." Andrea would not relent in her attack against the other women even after others in the class "attempt[ed] to contain her outburst or to find a common ground or to establish some dialogic relation" (197). The result of Andrea's outburst was the destruction of the class. The ones that stayed "were shell-shocked for weeks" (198), while others faded away, and still others took incompletes.

Andrea's outburst and her story of poverty and abuse—"left in my mailbox a densely hand written three-page narrative" (196)—is described by Wells as "a discourse by the student that does not promise docile improvement" (201). Andrea gives her the hand written note in response to a request for information about when Andrea would complete certain class deadlines for papers and such. Wells knows that the problem with such (expressivist) narratives in composition classes is that they're usually seen as performances which do not get evaluated, or they are evaluated formally, and turned back to the student for yet another performance (202). In effect, the teacher is never expected to respond with a narrative of her own, which Wells claims is what Andrea wanted. Wells answers Andrea with details that pertained to her institutional subjectivity. An instance where "[c]omposition pedagogy here becomes postmodern: it assumes a radical division in the writing subject, responds to only those elements of the subject that it can interrogate, and believes that the other elements can carry out their discourse unheard" (202). This permitted the disconnect between teacher and student. "Andrea's misrecognition was to seek out in a writing teacher [Wells] a correspondent and an interlocutor, to assume that my request for writing was an invitation to dialogue rather than a cue for performance" (202). Further on she adds: "My reading of Andrea's text postponed again her desire for an interlocutor, for that moment when the student is willing or unwillingly moved from the station of a subaltern speaker and heard as a colleague." On reflection, my student, Jay, might have wanted to travel the distance between student speaker and colleague, too. One place he tried was in the computer lab.

Jay was particularly unresponsive to my insistence that students use technology in the classroom. When we would go to the lab to use *Daedalus* (an on-line teaching environment) he would get up and try to help other students instead of doing his own work. Was he trying to be a colleague? I don't know because he never bothered to show me what he knew. His attempts at working the system—doing what it takes to get an "A" grade—mostly failed. He always wanted to do the assignments the others did in the lab, at home on his computer. I let him do it at first but always found that he had done the assignments incorrectly. No one was able to read his papers because he had not listened to me when I told the class the kind of file format they needed to use. All this was particularly annoying because his attempts at helping other students always confused my instructions to them. In the end, I was happy he left for home so that I could control class instruction.

I did with Jay, what Wells said she did with Andrea: "I invoked reason as a ritual practice, one that expels what is divergent" (212). I realize that his attempts at collaboration were within my own logic for classroom behavior. I wanted him to understand what he was to do vis-à-vis the other students instead of leaping out in front of my own plans. This I understood to be his desire to replace me as teacher.

You might say that I was setting myself up for someone like Jay when I revealed personal information to him. My purpose was to get closer to my students, appear more human, more vulnerable. But was I looking for interlocutors like Andrea, wanting students to be intellectual partners with me like Dixon? The failure in this strategy was that I was unable to continue this sort of collegiality and to see it make any sort of

difference. What difference did I want it to make? How about an instant return on my good will toward students? Impossible. Wells says:

Andrea's claim was impossible for pedagogy: in asserting the irreducible singularity of her oppression, she was right beyond question. In claiming that her ideas should be exempt from questioning, Andrea made a demand for privileged, unquestioned speech that the classroom cannot support. Her claim demonstrates the contradictory structure of the classroom, which accepts all students but nothing that they believe. (213)

It was similarly impossible for me to bridge the gap with students by expressing my sense of oppression. But what it did do was to open the gap larger, so Jay and I could enter it in an agonistic way that profiled the impossibility of teaching.

What Wells ultimately does with Andrea's contradiction is to conclude: "I am thinking here not of any utopian development of a pedagogical sublime but only of the self-conscious application and careful development of current practices such as collaborative journals, computer-linked classes, or Berthoff's dialectical notebook" (219). Her goal is to render the "intersubjective negotiation of meaning" more visible. In John Schilb's words, in order to make *articulation* instead of *representation* the work of the class,

I take it that a representation model of social action would operate from the premise that a particular person could stand or speak for an entire group. In a project of articulation, on the other hand, people strive to forge provisional alliances in the face of their differences as well as their similarities. The representation model can be associated with metaphor,

the figure of similitude, for it assumes that a group is so uniform that a single member can symbolize the rest. Articulation is based on metonymy, the figure of proximity, for it aims to connect people through laborious contacts rather than taking commonality for granted. (*Outburst* 41)

Schilb's articulation leaves me trying to think of ways to bring Jay's braggadocio into the work of the class, link it to something else, so he and I could have seen the class not as metaphor for the real but a continuation of life by other means.

But the position of teacher implies a certain paradox. According to Wells: "the teacher's position in the classroom . . . is both inside and outside the classroom's system of exchange, a position from which the speaker demands response but which is exempt from questioning" (210). My exchange of personal detail must have looked like a manipulation that then generated Jay's response. He was imitating the teacher, but instead of projecting weakness out of a position of strength, he chose to project strength out of a position (the student's) of weakness. And instead of him fleeing my attempts to reestablish authority by asserting my position of grand inquisitor, he bucked me by appearing more docile.

Both Wells and Dixon teach me that the position of the teacher is available for assumption and can be used ruthlessly. Dixon's Professor X was "shown the door" by the student who professed "that she was tired of hearing about 'that Marxist garbage'" (58). Andrea stands at the head of the seminar table reading the riot act to her classmates. Jay bounds around the computer lab "helping" students one-step ahead of me. We all can, I think, be charged with "impersonating Socrates," as Dixon says, but it is not just a problem of the female teacher, although it may be the problem

of the feminist teacher who happens to be either female or male. And it is definitely a problem for composition studies, which has been disparaged as a feminized discipline. I am far from being ashamed of practicing a feminized compositional pedagogy. Such pedagogy made me want to join with Jay to lead the class in community, instead I let him make me angry, and I responded to his aggression with aggression.

The difficulty in finding the ethical ground here is that these teacher narratives we tell go the way we want them to go. Wells says about Andrea: "Our speaking positions were changed and re-negotiated, but within limits that ensured that one and only one of us had to be crazy" (211). When I went crazy yelling at Jay in class, the structure of the class made sure I didn't stay crazy. At the end of the course, I gave Jay his grade, the most rational of moves. He attempted to grade me, too, in the course evaluation. But his mark on the form indicating that he "strongly disagreed" with whether I was a "competent teacher" was the only such mark. He's not in the norm, so he's crazy. After all, we always have one or two like him in our classes.

I'm not sure what there is to learn from students like Jay. All I know is that Jay's and my story was not a happy one. Dixon ends "Grad Girl Gangs" with this comment: "None of the versions of my discomfort releases me from wondering what it means that intellectual authority may have been torn asunder by us all." (63) I agree and would in my case replace "intellectual authority" with "impersonal authority," the authority that the rhetor wants to achieve that reflects the "image repertoire" (Barthes) students have of their teachers. If my revelation tore my students' image of what a teacher should be, or at least Jay's image of what a teacher should be, he tore mine of the student. We were "torn

asunder." Perhaps we need a different character to model the teacher, based less on Socrates-as-teacher and more on Socrates, the lover of discourses. The Socrates that plays with words, dispensing them as both poison and cure. Teaching and learning is not often a happy story, but we can take pleasure in talking about it afterward because we all had a part in the way it played out.

CHAPTER FIVE

EPILOGUE: TEACHING IN THE NETWORKED CLASSROOM

Prince Gregory Potëmkin was a favorite of Catherine II of Russia. He was famous for the beautiful but spurious "villages" he constructed to impress Catherine when she went out to inspect her domain. These villages would be lavishly presented to Catherine along the road she traveled. They were mere façade. Hence the term, Potëmkin Village: a hastily erected representation of what looks like a real village, but is not. The buildings are not functional; they could not be lived in even if people wanted to.

From my study of on-line communication, I have come to believe that most on-line communities are Potëmkin villages. The difference between those the Prince constructed and those set up in cyberspace is that the "residents" of an on-line community take the fact that such communities are Potëmkin Villages for granted. But despite the fact that cyberspace is a metaphor, we still tend to transfer our material desires on-line. What we often get in response are hollowed out replicas of what we would normally receive in a more full-fledged social encounter. We need the material to be present within the virtual. A Potëmkin village is not where anyone lives, after all, it is a rhetorical device to convince the observer that such houses are a part of a thriving village. They are constructed to reassure and flatter an audience.

As a writing teacher in a technology-rich classroom, I continually work within the illusion of virtual spaces. A Prince Potemkin I am not. I need all the skills I can muster to orient myself in the on-line world of teaching and retain my sense of what might be genuine and what is fantasy. And my students, on the other hand, are going with the flow and can't be bothered with stopping to find out if they're being manipulated on-line. But I do. That is why I have written this dissertation. My purpose has been to create knowledge for writing teachers who want to work with technology in their classrooms, for those who want to know what it means to work with students' writing on-line.

The writing I ask students to do on-line has a rhetoric that is immediate and captivating. And it has an audience beyond their teacher because their writing has the potential to go out over the network. And the network is where they will be spending a good part of their work lives. The plan I have is to get them used to this kind of writing. We don't just do "classroom" writing anymore in the electronic writing classroom. My students and I are learning to use a "rhetorics of technology." They create (invent), arrange, and deliver *machine-mediated* language for the purpose of evoking action upon the part of an audience (Johnson 21-22). They are a group of individuals joined in practical association, a community.

Computer-mediated communication technology can allow me as a teacher to deal with student writing quickly and at any time. To tell the truth, it is much more work and time consuming to teach this way. It has none of the amenities of a face-to-face class, conference, or discussion. When I get on the network I often feel like Czarina Catherine

trudging down between another row of pretty houses knowing that the Prince has done his job but feeling that the effort could have been put to better use. But I see the opportunity technology has made for all of us in composition. It has thrust us up against these pretty houses in the on-line Potëmkin Village, where we must deal with the changes technology brings to writing instruction.

I've learned to deal with classroom technology by thinking about the ways it constructs community. When my students and I get together on-line to read and write something interesting always happens. The writing they do often changes their ideas and the conversations they have with each other. But these on-line classroom communities still have the problems of physical communities. Individuals still feel threatened by the power of the group and the group can still feel threatened by those who want to control its agenda.

The uncertainty of relationships on-line begs us to speculate on theories of language. I do this in the dissertation. I view that the most pressing problem is to discover the nature of the work we do in the writing classroom. Who is the audience for the writing and what shape should it take to be effective in moving that audience to action? I suggest to my students that they need to know something about their history and ways people talked about their problems and persuaded each other to action. There is good work to be done in this regard, but it doesn't just happen. Not only doesn't effective language use just happen, but there are those out there who are using powerful language to get us to act against our better judgment. I teach rhetoric not just to teach effective writing but to show students ways of analyzing other people's writing, so they know the

impact of fine language, especially as they experience on-line interactions. But what kinds of rhetoric are going on-line? This dissertation has as its goal to answer that question. I investigate other writers' and teachers' experiences with technology and my own students' writing on-line

On-line rhetoric is a powerful way to evoke action in another person or group. Gurak's on-line protest groups and the barrage of messages they produced is a good example. It is a good example for several reasons. It illustrates the fragility of such communities because they are dependent on only a few rhetorical tropes to be effective—the force of their delivery and the the emotion of their claims. Such communities are one-dimensional groups that can only react to issues on the basis of self interest and anger. And the corporations they attack could, if they had understood these protest groups better, improved their own rhetorical stance to achieve their goals. But the corporations' goals are not founded in a "public" but in profit. I want my students to understand this situation.

But what possible help is this insight to my writing students? I tell them to look for who is using the most powerful language on-line. And not just words but images, too. What are the powerful language users saying and are they in control of a particular audience? In other words, what do they want that audience to do? And what are the chances that on-line rhetors will get what they want? Students can learn the methods that these writers use to effect others. In the short term, the classroom community that comes together on-line has important lessons for both teachers and students.

My classroom listserv, the center of this dissertation, gave students in one of my composition classes an opportunity to discuss their writing in a dynamic new way. The single listserv conversation produced nearly 80 messages, so you know students were energized by the process. I found that students easily adapted to the speed and noise produced in the synchronous motion of the listserv technology. In fact, the chaotic motion of the listserv is its quirky appeal for me. I found that it disturbed the received values of my students. They were not able to retain the logic of their old biases when they had to engage in fast-paced discussion. They were able to entertain opinions that they might not have volunteered ordinarily. Also, many more students were able to participate. More voices meant that the conversation had more threads. And these multiple threads did not get shut down as easily as they might have in a face-to-face classroom. These students talked about my assignment, but they also talked among themselves as if they had a real community. Students fell into enjoying the speed and challenged of interacting by way of the technology.

I am perhaps generalizing too much from this one example to the nature and impact of the technology. It is true that as the noise is dampened in these systems the old patterns of interaction re-emerge. Those who become good at chatting start to hog the space. The novelty of the exchanges wears off. But when that happens something else starts to appear that is noteworthy. Take the example I give of the all laptop writing classroom.

The laptop computer classroom was the place I turned to study the effects of technology on students who had complete access to CMC technology. As with the

listserv and the effect of noise on the system, what makes the laptop interesting is that it highlights student resistance to classroom instruction. My argument is that students commonly resist the power of the technology and configure their responses to it in ways that disrupt the mundane discipline the laptop enforces. Teachers can use students' resistance in a practical way. I am not saying that resistance should be coopted or attempts made to assimilate the student. I also don't mean to say that student resistance should be let to rein free. Community standards concerning the politics and the rhetorics of resistance have to be put in place.

Technology helps writing teachers disturb the nature of their classroom order to let the community re-order itself in ways it best suits them for the work of the class. And there is good work we can do and it gets done with help from others. The machine cannot be set up as the dominant factor in the classroom. On-line classroom communities are as good as the face-to-face classroom relationships between students and teacher. But the machine should not control the work. The work of writing should go on no matter what sort of machine is placed between students and their words.

This dissertation has helped me recognize the Potëmkin Village erected by those who want classroom technology to stand on its own, while teachers pass by confident in their classroom empires and in the acquiescence and efficiency of their students. It is not too late to extend these villages and equip them, so they are actually livable and productive places.

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