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**Everyday Intensities: Rhetorical Theory, Composition Studies,
and the Affective Field of Culture**

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and the Affective Field of Culture**

by

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Dedication

To my friends, who comfort me.

To my family, who encourage me.

To my love, who has given me a reason to smile.

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Everyday Intensities: Rhetorical Theory, Composition Studies, and the Affective Field of Culture

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Culture is not only constructed by articulated discourses and social forms, but also through lived experience, embodied processes, and public feelings that are best described as what Raymond Williams calls the “practical consciousness” and “structures of feeling” of everyday life. Rhetorical theory has yet to account adequately for this operation of rhetoric through circulating affective channels. This dissertation addresses three key concepts of rhetorical theory, and recontextualizes them within an affective field: rhetorical situation, rhetorical analysis, and epistemic rhetoric. Drawing from Spinozan theory to delineate the connections between affect and culture, I begin from the premise that rhetoric is a means of production within culture, as well as a hermeneutic tool for reading culture. Yet our theories and pedagogies have tended to privilege the latter over the former. By locating three specific instances of this tendency (in theories of rhetorical situation, textual analysis, and epistemic rhetoric), and reconsidering them in light of contemporary scholarship on affect and culture, this project seeks to broaden our

pedagogical and theoretical vocabularies, making them more suitable for describing the full range of rhetorical practice in culture.

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Introduction: Rhetoric's Bodies in Operation

In 2004, *Forbes Magazine* named Austin, Texas "America's Coolest City." The title almost serves as a self-fulfilling evocation of coolness. When it comes to hip cities, Austin is usually listed right alongside the pinnacles of cool, like San Francisco, New York, and Seattle. Details about Austin's cool status are often accompanied by praise for the city's development, green spaces, music scene, and a general—if not generally vague—quality of life. Much has been made, for example, of Austin's designation as "live music capital of the world," a distinction adopted because of the plentiful music festivals, live venues, and loyal base of music lovers. The city cultivates this designation with many experiences of live music. To take just one example, the Austin municipal airport features live bands performing on many afternoons. What's more, Austin airport travelers are now given free wireless access to streaming radio featuring prominent Austin musicians ("Musicians Featured"). A walk through Town Lake, a popular riverside space, features a statue of blues-rock legend Stevie Ray Vaughn. It is no surprise that one of music's cool kings also now serves as Austin's patron saint.

So cool is Austin, in fact, that it has been cited as a model for other cities that are experiencing economic and developmental slumps. In a 2005 story from *The Buffalo News*, writers Jay Rey and Charity Vogel propose a plan for boosting Buffalo's economy by making Buffalo cool. Rey and Vogel write, "Coolness will factor into our future, and the future of cities across the country, whether we want it to or not. . . . Maybe Austin can teach us how to become cool" (Rey and Vogel). The authors describe making a call to an Austin Chamber of Commerce representative, who told them this plan might not be so simple: "'If you have a lot of jobs— good-paying jobs—and a good cost of living, people are going to come,' says [the Austin Chamber of Commerce representative]." Rey and

Vogel smirk at this glimpse into Austin's cool secret. "If we had [jobs], of course, we might not be worrying so much. But thanks for the help, anyway" (Rey and Vogel). Nevertheless, Austin remains a widely cited model for civic development, even serving as an exemplar for Detroit—a city that has often been called a city in ruins.¹ In September 2003, Michigan's Governor, Jennifer Granholm, began pushing her "cool cities" initiative, hoping to bring places like Detroit out of economic ruins. As one news story documents Granholm's initiative, the idea of creating a "cool city" might not be easy, but there are examples that can serve as a cool template of sorts:

Cool cities are places where people with talent and imagination can find work, along with rich cultural, social and recreational opportunities - ingredients for a quality lifestyle, the governor said. In other words, places like Austin, Texas. Home to the University of Texas, the state's capital is the self-proclaimed "live music capital of the world." Nature-lovers can enjoy the downtown Town Lake surrounded by a 10-mile running and bike trail or head for the nearby Texas hill country, with its climbing, hiking and other recreational options. Austin rode the high tech boom of the 1990s, then took a hit with the tech collapse. But even as the jobless rate rose from 1.9 percent to 5.6 percent, many chose to wait out the recession, rather than pack and leave. (Goodman "Michigan")

The story reports that Detroit hopes to emulate Austin's success by "fostering and publicizing its musical creativity, from the Motown sound of the 1960s to its place as the techno music capital today" (Goodman "Michigan"). In other words, Granholm's initiative seeks to pump life into a lagging city by revitalizing its "quality of life," much like Austin has done.

Rhetorical scholars might recognize two questions in this scenario of Austin as the cooler-than-cool city. Most immediately, we might ask: What are the rhetorical components that comprise this civic labeling? To call Austin a "cool city," worthy of serving as a model of development, is inherently rhetorical. To borrow from Wayne Booth's definition of rhetoric, this label is rhetorical insofar as it involves a "range of resources . . . for producing effects" on other people (*Rhetoric* xi). The city itself is not so

much “cool” as much as it is the beneficiary of a “claim to coolness.” Moreover, a thoughtful rhetorical critic might also begin to sift through the question of positions and stakes: Who benefits from the definition of Austin as a cool city, or from connecting coolness to the scene of live music, nature, or jobs? Whose interests are being served? Alternatively, whose interests are obscured by the connection between economics and coolness? In short, the critical rhetorician might point out, the status of being “cool” depends on the triumph of a particular version of coolness.

The second question that might catch our attention is one that usually flies under the radar of our critical screens: How does this rhetoric spread? The notion of Austin as cool has gained a *popularity* (a word linked etymologically with population) by populating a range of attentions and discourses. Without necessarily returning our focus to the constitution of this rhetoric—the *what* of its make-up—we might hover at the question of its popularity, or its act of population. In other words, the second question shifts our focus away from the *what* of rhetoric to the *how* of its movement and circulation.²

It is this second question that most interests me in the following chapters. In order to give the “how” question serious consideration, this project aims to produce a method by which to explore the outbreaks, spread, and circulation of rhetorics in public. In other words, I want to give attention to the operation and movement of rhetorics. I hope to make a compelling argument for why rhetorical theory might choose to augment its own critical inquiry with attention to the *how* of rhetoric just as much as the *what*. We may want to begin probing the circuitry and channels that allow rhetorics to circulate, grow, and stick.

To be sure, the “how” question is not a new one. The question has been posed in various disciplines for some time. There are statisticians who keep tabs on populations of

particular groups in given areas, whether cultural or geographical. In a different disciplinary world, there are epidemiologists, who keep track of viral outbreaks and contagions. And then there are trend-population trackers, those people who watch trends move, mutate, grow, and die in various demographics. Popular writer Malcolm Gladwell lays out a theory of trend circulation in his bestselling book *The Tipping Point*. Gladwell introduces his book by describing it as "the biography of an idea," which is that

the best way to understand the emergence of fashion trends, the ebb and flow of crime waves, . . . or the phenomena of word of mouth, or any number of the other mysterious changes the mark everyday life is to think of them as epidemics. Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do. (7)

Gladwell's work does not take specific trends as his focus, but he is instead interested in the spread itself, or the operations that allow for public circulations to occur. In this sense, he is less interested in the *what* of trends than in the *how* of their public function. His *telos* is the operability of trend "epidemics," whether the growth of certain brand names or suicide trends among teenagers. It is this idea of operation that he claims to be tracking.³

Similarly, the "how" question (How does Austin's "cool" rhetoric spread and stick?) does not emphasize the content of a given rhetoric, but rather the operations through which it circulates. This question potentially turns rhetorical scholars into epidemiologists of sorts, tracking the outbreaks and movements of public rhetorics. Our research question shifts its attention to tracking the conditions of circulation: what allows for a given rhetoric to gain adherence, amassing certain energies and intensities? The *how* question thus takes an interest in theorizing the social technologies that merged "live music" with "coolness," or even "coolness" with economic development. What are the public operations that allowed for Austin's kind of coolness to become desirable in Detroit's civic discourses? These are questions that underlie an interest in what we might

dub "rhetorical operationality," or rhetoric's movement. It is this operationality that I would like to explore further in the four chapters that follow.

PRIOR FRAMEWORKS OF OPERATIONALITY: RHETORIC'S COMMUNING BODIES

A number of rhetorical scholars have already theorized rhetoric's operationality in different terms. Kenneth Burke is perhaps one of the most prolific scholars to imagine how rhetorics circulate and move in public. Because Burke has created a complex theory of "rhetoric's operationality," his framework is worth considering in depth here. In a number of his works, though most prominently in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke takes the key term "identification" as a starting point for theorizing how rhetorics operate and gain adherence in the human barnyard. "We need never deny the presence of strife, enmity, faction as a characteristic motive of rhetorical expression," writes Burke. "[Y]et we can at the same time always look beyond this order, to the principle of identification in general, a terministic choice justified by the fact that the identification in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression" (*Rhetoric* 20). This version/vision of identification is born from what Burke calls consubstantiality, which he explains in his well-known formulation: "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B" (20). This identification of A with B is the same even if A merely *believes* the interests are joined. Burke claims that this identification renders A, who remains a distinct individual, "substantially one" with another person. "Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another," Burke writes (21). This con-substantiality points to the "common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, and attitudes that make [people] *consubstantial*" (21). People joined through identification are thus sharing a particular *substance* within a way-of-life.

In Burkean terms, there is no rhetorical scene that is uninvolved in wider scenes of identifications. Burke explains the principle of rhetorical identification like this: "The fact that an activity is capable of reduction to intrinsic, autonomous principles does not argue that it is free from identification with other orders of motivation extrinsic to it" (27). It is this notion of identification as shared-substance that leads Burke to conclude that even *war* is a version of *identification*. He explains, "[B]efore each culminating blast there must be a vast network of interlocking operations, directed communally" (22). Even rival factions are said to be cooperating through *identification* insofar as each "parry and thrust . . . can be said to cooperate in the building of an over-all form" (23). *Identification* thus becomes a primary rhetorical term, since it is what precedes the strife or the cooperation of everyday life. Rhetoric itself, therefore, is what Burke calls a "*body of identifications*," insofar as rhetoric makes individuals and causes consubstantial with others.

Surprisingly, Burke suggests that this identification occurs in large part through stylistic means. "You persuade a man insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (55). Indeed, the act of persuasion may not be an assent to a speech's content—its *what*. Identification may very well exist in the interstices of the form itself, according to Burke. He writes, "Longinus refers to that kind of elation wherein the audience feels as though it were not merely receiving, but were itself creatively participating in the poet's or speaker's assertion. Could we not say, in such cases, the audience is exalted by the assertion because it has the feel of collaborating in the assertion?" (58). We can see this kind of "creative participation" in various stylistic devices such as climax, *gradatio*, ethymemes, and other tropes that seem to "naturally" build in such a way that the audience anticipates the end even before the rhetor speaks it. Burke uses the infamous

tripartite example: "Who controls Berlin, controls Germany; who controls Germany controls Europe; who controls Europe controls the world" (58). Even if the audience disagrees violently with the speaker's content, this form still pulls an unwilling identification from its hearers. The audience gives assent to the form, helping to complete the idea in spite of themselves.

This notion of identification-based "assent" links persuasion to a much more subtle, intimate, and affective movement. In *The Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke suggests that we might gain a better understanding of persuasion by exploring its etymological roots. "[W]e could with more accuracy speak of persuasion 'to attitude,' rather than persuasion to out-and-out action," he writes (50). In Burke's terms, persuasion has a strong connection to people's attitudinal orientations. As he explores the etymological roots of persuasion, we begin to see why we might productively disentangle "persuasion to attitude" from "persuasion to action." Both the Greek term of persuasion, *peitho*, and Aristotle's term *pistis* ("proof"), have resonations with the Latin word for "faith." At the same time, Burke continues, the Latin root of "persuasion," *suadere*, is related to our words "suavity," "assuage," and "sweet" (*Rhetoric* 52). Identification is a kind of sweetness.

Burke thus recasts persuasion as a movement towards communion. As Burke might say, the difference reflects an emphasis on *attitudinal* power. For example, in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," he points out the power of inducing the German people to identify *as* Aryans, *as* pan-Germans, *as* anti-Jewish. He identifies Hitler's rhetorical moves early on as an overwhelming appeal to identification: "Hitler found a panacea, a 'cure for what ails you,' a 'snake oil,' that made such sinister unifying possible within his own nation" ("Hitler's" 192). The Nazi's greatest source of power was not their ability to persuade people through the content of their rhetoric. Rather, the Nazi's strength lied in

this unifying movement of the people; it lied in the power of (an evil) communion. To use Burke's language, Hitler was able to rhetorically identify A with B, making their interests appear consubstantial. "Every movement that would recruit its followers from among many discordant and divergent bands, must have some spot towards which all roads lead," writes Burke ("Hitler's" 192). Hitler not only materialized this "spot" in the location of Munich, but he also ideationally created a genealogical "spot" to identify communally.

This sense of persuasion is subtle insofar as it occurs in degrees. Even when we *disagree* with the message or even when we loathe the outcome of such a rhetorical call, we may still find ourselves "communing" with the language itself in various ways. Persuasion happens in the audience's assent, participation, and acts of identification. In Burke's well-known example, though the shepherd caring for her sheep may be most visibly defined in her role of caretaker, she is "implicitly identified with their slaughter" ("Rhetorics and Poetics" 302). The shepherd herself may never be persuaded to slaughter the animals in her care. Yet, at the same time, she communes at the same "spot" as the butcher. In much the same way, the Burkean persuasion-as-identification operates in various (and even contradictory) degrees and "places." The rhetorician may "lose the battle," while still managing to gain ground. Persuasion-as-identification is never total.

Moreover, it is because persuasion is a kind of communion in language that Burke can introduce something he calls "pure persuasion." He explains, "Pure persuasion involves the saying of something, not for an extra-verbal advantage to be got by the saying, but because of a satisfaction intrinsic to the saying" (*Rhetoric* 269). Pure persuasion might *summon*, but it does so because "it likes the feel of a summons" (269). The call is not meant to be answered. Pure persuasion revels in the language itself. Burke likens this kind of persuasion to "phatic communion," which is "random talk" that

proceeds for no other purpose than to establish a bond between people. (*How are you? Hey ya. What's up?*) Pure persuasion is a movement of language. Burke is careful not to introduce pure persuasion as a go(o)d term—something that should or should not be pursued. Rather, he identifies pure persuasion as an impulse of language toward *ongoing communion*. Pure persuasion is that which keeps the tension of identification always in play. It makes and unmakes identification simultaneously, keeping the communal impulse alive. As Burke explains, “[T]here is, *implicit in language itself*, the act of persuasion; and *implicit in the perpetuating of persuasion . . . there is the need of ‘interference.’* For a persuasion that succeeds, dies” (*Rhetoric* 274). Burke repeatedly evokes the image of “courtship” in his explanation of pure persuasion, which we may productively extend in order to see what he’s trying to say.

Pure persuasion is thus an indefinite extension of communion. It is a process that keeps up this *tension of involvement* for itself and no other reason. That is, this experience of indefinite communion is not a means toward an(other) end. “Since the ultimate form of persuasion is composed of three elements (speaker, speech, spoken-to), as regards the act of persuasion alone obviously you could not maintain this form except insofar as the plea remained unanswered,” he writes. “When the plea is answered you have gone from persuasion to something else” (*Rhetoric* 274). Yet we should note the fact that interference, distance, and separation are key terms in this concept of pure persuasion. Burke refers to this ingredient as a kind of *necessary standoffishness*: “[‘S]tandoffishness’ is necessary to the form, because without it the appeal could not be maintained. For if the union is complete, what incentive can there be for appeal?” (*Rhetoric* 271). Returning to the courtship metaphor, Burke argues that the only reason for courtship at all comes from the situation of *not* being “together” or “unified.” Pure

communion is possible, in other words, because we are first in the condition of separation.

More significantly, however, this same primary condition also underlies Burkean persuasion as identification. As he explains, "In its essence communication involves the use of verbal symbols for purposes of appeal. Thus, it splits formally into the three elements of speaker, speech, and spoken-to, with the speaker so shaping his speech as to 'commune-with' the spoken-to. This purely technical pattern is the precondition of *all* appeal" (*Rhetoric* 271). Though a kind of union is the result of persuasion's identification, it does not come *before* this gesture. Indeed, the very act of identification attempts to overcome a primary separation. Burke writes that *A Rhetoric of Motives* will deal with this problem of separation, or "the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another. . ." (22). Why would we begin in division while, at the same time, taking "identification" as key term? "Because," responds Burke:

to begin with, 'identification' is, by the same token, though roundabout, to confront the implications of *division*. . . . Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. *If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence.* (*Rhetoric* 22; italics mine)

As we find in the case of "pure persuasion," the human condition is one of separation *primarily*. From Burke's perspective, the fact that we can identify at all is "proof" of this primary division.

At the same time, we must remember that what comes first in persuasion is this "vast network of interlocking operations" that is always operating in the relations between individuals, causes, and rhetorics (*Rhetoric* 22). Persuasion and identification depend upon a paradoxical connection in place between (divided) individuals: "In pure identification there would be no strife. Likewise, there would be no strife in absolute

separateness, since opponents can join battle only through a mediatory ground that makes their communication possible, thus providing *the first condition necessary for their interchange of blows*" (*Rhetoric* 25). In this paradox, we find Burke speaking of another *primary* condition in the act of persuasion: sociality. He further remarks that we cannot ever quite extract the two conditions from one another. "[P]ut identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric," he writes (*Rhetoric* 25). Burke thus presents both a *standoffishness* and a *togetherness* as primary to the rhetorical scene.

While Burke's project proposes ways of understanding how rhetorics circulate and gain adherence, it should be strongly dissociated from sender-receiver models of communication. That is, Burke is not interested in extending the communication triangle or theorizing how a "message" travels from sender to receiver. His project is different, for example, from I.A. Richards' early attempt to theorize communication models that begin with the "source mind" and ends with the "destination mind" (Foss, Foss, and Trap 28). Although Richards does indeed speculate about how rhetoric functions, the functionality in question relates to the message/meaning, or what we could call the "elemental constitution" of (a) rhetoric. As Richards tells it, "[T]he whole business of Rhetoric comes down to comparisons between the meanings of words" ("Philosophy" 979). However, Burke exposes a different kind of question altogether. Bracketing "the message," his different model theorizes technologies of intense circulation. The Burkean framework above does not so much answer the question "What does Austin as cool city mean?" as "What allows for 'cool Austin' to catch fire in Motown?"

If Burke sounds like he is working in a discourse of bodies, it is because he is. In this sense, Burke echoes Baruch Spinoza, a much earlier thinker who theorized how

rhetorics circulate and gain adherence, as well as why we should think about these questions. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari point out that Spinoza's exploration of rhetorical movement and operability were not only central questions in his own thinking, but remain key questions for our own age. According to Deleuze and Guattari: "[T]he fundamental problem of political philosophy is still precisely the one that Spinoza saw so clearly. . . : 'Why do men fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?' How can people possibly reach the point of shouting: 'More taxes! Less Bread?'" (1983 29). The authors find Spinoza invaluable for helping to think about why and how certain rhetorics "stick," even when they are so deeply injurious. Deleuze and Guattari write, "[T]he masses [are] not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they *wanted* fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for" (1983 29). Spinoza accounts for this "perversion" by suggesting that people are "overcome" by emotions even when they know that the decisions are harmful: "For a man at the mercy of his emotions is not his own master but is subject to fortune, in whose power he so lies that he is often compelled, although he sees the better course, to pursue the worse" (153). This "perversion of desire" is precisely what Spinoza theorizes in his philosophy on politics and ethics.

Yet, this emotional overcoming is not a simple process in Spinoza's theory. For Spinoza, a body is never a/lone(ly) body, for one body is always in relation to another. "The human body can be affected in many ways by which its power of activity is increased or diminished," he writes (*Ethics* 104). A body is *affected by* another body as much as it *affects* another body. His sensing body is a body-in-relation. In his brief commentary on Spinoza, Deleuze explains that Spinozist philosophy defines bodies as "*capacities* for affecting and being affected. . ." (*Spinoza* 124). The body as an affective capacity is thus always entering into relations with other bodies. A (Spinozist) body

cannot be defined apart from relations with the world. Moreover, according to Deleuze, a body “can be anything: it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity” (*Spinoza* 127). The Spinozist analysis of everyday life does not read discrete bodies, therefore, but instead reads the affective compositions that take place when one body encounters (and enters into a relation with) another body.

Here we arrive at an *affective* reading of everyday life as it begins with relationality of all bodies; it begins in composition. As Deleuze continues, these compositions materialize as *compounds* that “form a new, more ‘extensive’ relation, . . . or compound directly to constitute a more ‘intense’ capacity or power” (*Spinoza* 126). To borrow from one of Spinoza’s own examples, we see such compositions with drug use: the human body becomes slower (in the case of opiates, for instance) or faster (in the case of cocaine) depending on the mixture. Or we might look to the bodies within a weather system: compound the body of warm, rising, humid air with bodies of high winds and we get the force a tornado. Each body affects the other, generating new kinds of intensities through its compounds. In this way, Spinoza is arguably one of the first thinkers to suggest that rhetorical outbreaks in public life are affective matters. The importance of talking about bodies when discussing rhetoric’s operation thus hinges around the central—even the ubiquitous—question of relationality.

Although bodies-in-relation might not seem to have a clear connection to affective realms, Spinoza suggests differently. More recently, Sarah Ahmed’s *Cultural Politics of Emotion* has vigorously argued that emotions are not “personal,” but actually reflect the scene of bodies in relations. “[T]he surfaces of bodies ‘surface’ as an effect of the impressions left by others,” writes Ahmed (10). We are never bodies alone, in other words. Bodies are constantly being im/pressed by the bodies that are in contact with

them. "We need to remember the 'press' in an impression. . . ," says Ahmed, "So not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave me with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me" (6). This is what Ahmed calls "emotions," or relations between bodies who come into contact. She explains, "Emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of 'towardness' and 'awayness' in relation to such objects" (8). When we talk about relationality, Ahmed suggests, we are clearly in an affective dimension.

Furthermore, Ahmed echoes Spinoza in suggesting that "rhetorics" gain adherence through relations between bodies.⁴ Like Spinoza, she finds herself asking the operational question: *What sticks?* Ahmed wonders aloud: "Why is social transformation so difficult to achieve? Why are the relations of power so intractable and enduring. . . ?" (11-12). For Ahmed, one response to the question of "What sticks?" lies in the investment a body has with/in another body. "Attention to emotions allows us to address the question of how subjects become *invested* in particular structures such that their demise is felt as a kind of living death," she writes (12). To slightly rework Spinoza (via Deleuze and Guattari), people's desire is not perverted as much as it is invested in, or composed with, certain bodies over others. In Ahmed's words, "What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place. . . . [A]ttachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others" (11). The power of rhetoric to achieve certain "attachments" cannot be dissociated from our power to feel, and to feel other bodies. As Burke might put it, the power of rhetoric to achieve identification cannot be dissociated from our sociality, our communion, with other bodies. Burke, Spinoza, Ahmed, and others⁵ frame their theories within what we might loosely call an affective framework, moving away from an emphasis upon rationality in order to think through of rhetoric's operationality.

AFFECT AND RHETORIC

This *how* question—How do certain rhetorics circulate, spread, and "stick" in the public's attention?—is receiving great amounts of attention in various discourses. For example, the field of advertising has benefited from detailed study of how people come to feel brand loyalty. Persuading customers to buy your product is no longer a matter of "proving" your claims about the quality, durability, reliability, or any other pieces of evidence. Those are not how sticky brands circulate widely in the popular landscape, according to many brand-theorists. As a *Fast Company* article advises: "Quit talking about benefits and performance. Instead, show your brand as part of an experience, an adventure, a myth, or a dream" (Tischler). Meanwhile, at the other end of the spectrum, groups like Adbusters are attempting to fight the "stickiness" of branding (even while using similar tactics of "stickiness" in their own rhetoric). And advertisement is far from the only place where the question of rhetorical operability can be found. Circulation is relevant to political questions (How does President George W. Bush gain such popular support for a war against Iraq?), cultural questions (How does the "culture of fear" spread wide enough to structure our daily lives? ⁶), technological questions (How did blogs achieve the legitimization that allowed them to receive official media credentials to the 2004 Republican and Democratic conventions?), and so on. It is crucial, therefore, that rhetorical theory generate methods for addressing these questions. My own attempt at imagining such a method draws upon theories of affect in order to meet this need.

The fact that I turn to "affect" in order to discuss rhetorical operability is both unavoidable *and* a product of synchronous thinking among critical theorists. On one hand, I argue that rhetoric's operability can only be theorized through an understanding of affective dimensions: rhetoric circulates and gains intensity through

affect. On the other hand, my choice of vocabulary resonates with recent scholarship on various aspects of affect and culture. Although Fredric Jameson argues that a postmodern depthlessness, or "the waning of affect," has replaced self-present feeling and emotional expression, a number of cultural theorists have recently taken issue with Jameson's assertions. Brian Massumi, for example, argues that we are experiencing not a waning of affect but a surfeit: "Affect has been deterritorialized, uprooted from spatiotemporal coordinates in which it naturally occurs and allowed to circulate" (*Users Guide* 135). Furthermore, writes Massumi, "affect is central to an understanding of our information- and image-based late capitalist culture. . . . The problem is that there is no cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect" (*Parables* 27). That is, the key to reading postmodern or poststructuralist culture lies in our ability to read the affective elements at work. Contrary to Jameson's position, therefore, many critics are now turning to a concept of affect in order to read public rhetorics, pedagogies, and cultural practices.

For instance, Lawrence Grossberg's *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* has become one of the most frequently cited works in discussions of affect and cultural studies. Grossberg argues that academic and popular ways of identifying culture with symbolic communication have rendered "the reduction of culture to texts and of human reality to the plane of meaning. The analysis of culture then involves the interpretation of cognitive, semantic or narrative content which lies hidden within the text" (43). The problem with this analysis, according to Grossberg, is that the plane of semantic meaning is not the only plane in which we live. Such modes of cultural analysis are not sufficient to explain how passion means to people. He writes, "The active engagement with texts is rarely determined exclusively by the interpretative content of meaning production. . . . If not every meaning is a representation, and not every text has representational effects, it may also be true that texts have effects other than meaning-effects. . ." (44-45). In other

words, what moves us may fall outside of meaning-effects. According to Massumi's related theoretical work, the experience of affect is profoundly meaningful, though it is a meaning that exists outside of cognition. It is more properly described as an asignifying meaning that exists in the body. "[O]ur body thinks with pure feeling before it acts thinkingly," writes Massumi (*Parables* 266). This space enfolds meaning into the body, as Grossberg suggests, prior to ideology and signification.

A number of theorists have also recently (re)considered the experience of affect across Deleuzian lines of thought. These accounts tend to stress the experience of undergoing affect prior to subjectivity or formulations of representational meaning. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari counter the notion that affects are feelings or perceptions. Rather, affects exceed the strength of those who undergo them. Affects are "nonhuman becomings," they argue. "[Affect] is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernability," they write, "as if things, beasts, and persons . . . endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an affect" (*Philosophy* 173). Deleuze and Guattari are careful to specify that affect does not return us to some primal state of humanity or bestial existence. Rather, "[i]t is a question only of ourselves, here and now; but what is animal, vegetable, mineral, or human in us is now indistinct. . ." (*Philosophy* 174). Affect is thus the experience of indeterminacy that we already live.

Deleuzian theorist Steven Shaviro extends this complex notion of affect in many of his works, including *Connected*, *Doom Patrols*, *The Cinematic Body*, and a number of essays. In his essay "Beauty Lies in the Eye," Shaviro situates affect in terms of the "blow" of aesthetic judgment: "The aesthetic judgment is not my spontaneous thought, so much as it is something that forces me to think. . . . In the aesthetic experience, I am being obliged to conceptualize and communicate, while the very means to do so are

withheld from me" (14). He goes on: "The trouble is that communication almost necessarily involves cognition, but the aesthetic judgment is non-cognitive" (15). The force of beauty hits a viewer, forcing her to undergo an experience. Though she cannot communicate (through cognitive means) this experience, there is a real effect in the body. We can call this real effect the experience of affect.

Recent work on affect has also been conducted in the fields of cultural studies and feminist theory. In addition to Ahmed's scholarship, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* has articulated the importance of discussing affect in cultural studies. Sedgwick echoes thinkers like Massumi and Grossberg, who understand affect as extending beyond cognitive, linguistic meaning. "I have an inclination to deprecate the assignment of a very special value, mystique, or thingness to meaning and language," explains Sedgwick. "Many kinds of objects and events *mean*, in many heterogeneous ways and contexts, and I see some value in not reifying or mystifying the linguistic kinds of meanings unnecessarily" (6). The other kinds of meanings that Sedgwick explores are what she calls the "affective" meanings that escape articulation in linguistic, rational, or propositional form. Similarly, Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* makes a subtle argument for "remain[ing] alert to forms of affective life that have not solidified into institutions, organizations, or identities" (9). Emphasizing the public nature of affect (and vice versa), Cvetkovich claims to theorize affect as a basis of the social: "[A]ffective experience that falls outside of institutional or stable forms of identity or politics can form the basis for public culture" (17). Although Sedgwick and Cvetkovich emphasize different aspects of affectivity, even framing their use of the term in dramatically different ways, there is a resonance between them. Both theorists seek a model of culture

that does not rely solely upon categories of representational thought and linguistic articulation. They seek a cultural theory that takes *feeling* seriously.

But perhaps we should here delineate the difference between what is commonly called "emotion" and the affective dimensions that Massumi, Grossberg, Sedgwick, and others discuss. One recent source that has been an invaluable work on emotion is Martha Nussbaum's book *Upheavals of Thought*. Nussbaum's work on emotions is worth reading carefully, not only because she has much to say about the intersections of philosophy, ethics, and emotion, but also because Nussbaum's conception of emotion bears a strong resemblance to the ways in which emotions have been conceptualized in rhetoric and composition. In *Upheavals of Thought*, Nussbaum suggests that emotions possess several defining characteristics: (1.) Emotions are thoughts that have an object; (2.) emotional thoughts about an object embody a way of seeing; (3.) emotions contain a belief about the object (26-28). Nussbaum thus argues that emotions understand their object as invested with a value (30). Emotions are localized, relating to the fields of value that I have invested in (31). Modifying a Greek Stoic view on emotion, Nussbaum frequently refers to this local characteristic in terms of the eudemonistic: a cognitive form of evaluative judgment that ascribes importance to external things for our own flourishing (22). For Nussbaum, emotions always involve thought of an object's salience to and for the thinking subject.

Likewise, the literature on affect in rhetoric-composition tends to focus on personal dimensions of feeling. Susan McLeod's *Notes from the Heart* has become a much-cited work on the intersection of feeling and composition. Though McLeod specifically says that affect is not synonymous with emotion, her discussion runs an interesting parallel to Nussbaum's theory of emotion. In fact, this parallel is reinforced by the two theoretical frameworks—cognitive psychology and social constructivism—

McLeod uses in her discussion of affect and emotion (19-42). Emotions, McLeod explains, "involve . . . a cognitive evaluation of physiological arousal (an evaluation shaped by cultural and social norms and expectations)" (39). For McLeod, affect is an internal, personal by-product (cognitive evaluation of physiological arousal, for example) that has been socially influenced. In other words, McLeod appears to make emotion a primarily interpretive phenomenon. This is why she argues that writing teachers should familiarize themselves with their students' affective propensities—their (affective) interpretive bents. "Because they carry affective freight," she writes, "value-laden beliefs can give rise to the emotions that either facilitate or interfere with students' writing processes. . . . As teachers, we need to know more about how students' beliefs and attitudes are formed and how we can help students understand them as they interact with their writing processes" (74).⁷ This concept of emotion is thus thoroughly rooted in the (personal) subject.

The trouble with the above perceptions of emotion is that the self-contained subject has become an untenable concept. In his introduction to the collection *Who Comes after the Subject?*, Jean-Luc Nancy explains that the question of subjectivity, the subject, and these terms' manifold deconstructions has become one of the greatest motifs in contemporary philosophy. The influential works of Marx, Freud, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Bataille, Husserl—not to mention the events of decolonization, postmodernism's divorce of signifier and signified, the trauma of Nazi death camps—have all contributed great momentum towards the "deconstruction of interiority, of self-presence, of consciousness, of mastery, of the individual or collective property of an essence" (Cadava 4). Posing such a question as Nancy does—"Who comes after the subject?"—only supposes that the subject as self-presence or certitude is no longer defensible. (No matter what may come, it is not the subject we once knew.) At the same

time, however, Nancy argues against inchoate charges of nihilism in regard to this question. "There is nothing nihilistic in recognizing that the subject—the property of the self—is . . . never closed upon itself without remainder. . ." (Cadava 4). An investigation of post-subjectivity's scene is not a negative deconstruction of agency, therefore, but is an acknowledgement of this remainder—the excess of which cannot be captured by the subject's parameters.

Turning away from "the subject," some theorists have begun to think of individuation apart from the personal. Deleuze has been among the most prolific writers of such singularities-without-subjects. In Deleuze's contribution to *Who Comes after the Subject?*, he describes individualities that are outside of the personal: "a life, a season, a wind, a battle, 5 o'clock. . ." ("Concept" 95). As we begin to enlarge our notion of individualizations as/and events, Deleuze continues, it becomes almost impossible to speak in terms of a delimited individual. "We can call ecceities or hecceities these individuations that no longer constitute persons or 'egos'" ("Concept" 95). Even the most obvious figures of delimited personhood—I and You—appear somewhat empty when held up against the notions of hecceities. "In short," writes Deleuze, "we believe that the notion of the subject has lost much of its interest on behalf of pre-individual singularities and non-personal individuations" ("Concept" 95). Deleuze spends a great deal of time with the notion of singularities in *The Logic of Sense*, where he writes that what is neither personal nor individual are "emissions of singularities insofar as they occur on an unconscious surface . . . , radically distinct from the fixed and sedentary distributions as conditions of the syntheses of consciousness" (102). Recalling Nietzsche's Dionysian energies, Deleuze writes that singularities emerge as a "subject" of this new discourse: "The subject is free, anonymous, and nomadic singularity which traverses men as well as plants and animals independently of the matter of their individuation and the forms of

their personality" (*Logic* 107). Singularities are thus non-jelled individuations that have not (yet) emerged as fully formed individuals.

This description of singularities becomes somewhat more familiar to us when we begin to think in terms of what we might call "non-human individuations," such as a rain shower or a moment. In his commentary on Deleuze, John Rajchman explains, "A 'singularity' is thus not an instantiation of anything—it is not particularity or uniqueness. As Deleuze puts it, its individuation is not a specification; . . . it is a 'freshness' of what has not yet been made definite by habit or law" (*Connections* 54-55). Think about the hecceities that actually express themselves in a life, continues Rajchman. "An hour of a day, a river, a climate, a strange moment during a concert can be like this—not one of a kind, but the individuation of something that belongs to no kind, but which, though perfectly individuated, yet retains an indefiniteness, as though pointing to something 'ineffable'" (*Connections* 85). Singularities, or hecceities, are thus neither common nor proper to a genus or a species. They appear adjacent to those individualizing categorizations that assign something as common or particular. Giorgio Agamben similarly writes that singularities are indifferent to the common and the proper. He points to such singularities as the face, which is not describable merely in terms of commonality or uniqueness (*Coming Community* 19). My lover's face is unique in its own peculiarity, distinguishing it from my neighbor's face. At the same time, however, the face is not merely proper. Even the most mangled, wrecked, burnt, or smashed faces are recognizable in their common traits. The face is strangely adjacent to the realm of individuality that operates by way of the common and proper. Likewise, singularity exists adjacent to the discourse on the (common and proper) subject.

Consequently, because emotions are identified with the subject and the personal, the sensations experienced by singularities are not reducible to the emotive. Cultural

theorists have thus become increasingly interested in affect. We can begin to see where singularity engenders the Spinozan sense of affect as the experience of passage from one state to another—either increasing or diminishing potencies—when a body encounters another body. Deleuze remarks, "[Affect] [is] not indicative or representative, since it is experienced in a lived duration that involves the difference between two states" (*Spinoza* 49). Affect is born from relations among bodies, and the passages or duration of intensities that are born (out) from the relation. Affect is thus not representational. Furthermore, in *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze says that singularities belong to another dimension beyond manifestation, denotation, or signification. They are "pre-individual," prior to the jelled image of individuality, even when that image claims to be based upon plurality (*Logic* 52). As we saw above, the connection between post/pre-subjective individuations and affect, moreover, has its earliest roots in Spinoza.

My own project thus begins (affectively) in the middle of these cross-conversations on affect, public culture, and rhetorical movement. Like Burke, I am interested in the vast network of interlocking operations that help to rhetorically create what we call *everyday life*. Like Spinoza, I am also interested in addressing the questions of why and how certain oppressive rhetorics achieve such ideological strongholds in popular imaginations and desires. In this middling, I align myself closely with the disciplinary work begun by Lynn Worsham, who has repeatedly identified affect as a key term for rhetoric and composition studies. Not only does affect "bind us to particular ways of life that make the affective (and effective) work of ideology almost invisible to us," argues Worsham, but "if we truly value work directed toward effecting social and political change, then it is incumbent on us as intellectuals to continue the . . . work of making 'really free' places. . . ." ("Coming" 112). A theory of how rhetorics circulate and operate affectively opens new ways for discussing both of these aspects: an

understanding of how and why certain discourses and ideologies "stick," as well as possibilities for creating places that are freer, if only temporarily.⁸ In order to pursue both of these goals, I present this project as one model of rhetoric's public operation. Although we will not necessarily come any closer to a final "pinning down" of what affect is, how it works, or even how we can employ it for our own purposes, I offer a new set of vocabulary for our field to use toward our ongoing goals of creating less oppressive spaces.⁹

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In the following chapters, I attempt to augment several familiar theories of rhetoric by imagining how they can more actively account for rhetoric's operability and movement in public. In Chapter One, "Strange Theory: Structures of Feelings and the Affective Field of Culture," I build upon Raymond Williams's insight that "we have indeed to find other terms for the undeniable experience of the present" (128). His attempt at such a term is "structures of feeling," those elements of culture that are experienced and felt in the present moment. While Williams argues that social forms may be more recognizable when they are "articulate and explicit," culture cannot be responsibly reduced to only those forms that are "finished" in this regard. Williams accuses "most description and analysis" of just such a reduction. If there is a place to build on Williams's insight, it is with his emphasis on structures. His analysis implies that such structures of feeling lay outside the purview of our analyses, and that they exist in a supplementary position to our traditional modes of understanding. This chapter proposes instead that we redescribe Williams's structures as an "affective field," against which and in which all culture operates. Rhetoric is both a hermeneutic tool for reading culture and a means of production within the culture, and as such, it has been subject to the same

reduction that Williams describes. I argue that we should resist such reductions, not by refuting more traditional applications of rhetorical concepts, but by resituating them within an affective field. Reconceiving rhetoric in this fashion can help us return that "undeniable experience of the present" to the scope of our discipline, both theoretically and pedagogically.

Chapter Two, "From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetoric's Ecology," extends this discussion by revisiting the notion of rhetorical situation. Whereas earlier work on rhetorical situation centered around the elements of the rhetorical situation: audience, reality, and constraints, I argue that rhetorical situations operate within a network of lived "practical consciousness" or everyday "structures of feeling." Placing the rhetorical "elements" within this wider context de-stabilizes the discrete borders of a rhetorical situation. The consequence of such a de-stabilization has significant effects on rhetorical pedagogies that present writing as a response to a given problem, or exigence, by emphasizing the rhetorician-writer's position and experience within a particular affective ecology. The felt dimension, including the felt intensity and investment, of an articulated exigence depends upon the experience of individual bodies within this ecology.

As an example of this wider rhetorical context, I explore a perceived rhetorical problem of urban sprawl and development that occurred in Austin beginning in the late 1990s. Many Austin locals began to decry the loss of independent and locally-owned businesses across the city. The phrase "Keep Austin Weird" began to circulate in private, local business, and civic spaces as a way to combat the problem of urban sprawl and homogenization. While the "Keep Austin Weird" movement can be seen as a rhetorical response to the "exigence" of city-wide overdevelopment, we can also situate the exigence's evocation within a wider context of affective ecologies comprised of ongoing processes of material experiences, stories, moods, and public feelings.

Of course, the notion of "reading" rhetorical operation is complicated by the fact that it functions within an affective field. The local and specific rhetorical situation, in its singular event-ness, cannot be exchanged in a "general" rhetorical vocabulary. However, many textbooks in composition teach students to analyze texts—including written texts, cultural artifacts, and events—according to formal rhetorical features, such as their modes of appeal and elements of rhetorical situation. While this form of analysis is valuable for teaching students how to recognize the rhetoricity and constructedness of cultural texts, this practice can also underemphasize the ways that these texts circulate through cultural networks in local and singularly specific ways. By emphasizing only one point of the circulation process, the production and consumption of textual meaning, the rhetorical analysis shifts attention away from rhetoric operates as a lived process in culture. An analysis of the "general" rhetorical features of a text do not account for that text's circulation within those specific affective ecologies in which the rhetor-analyst may find herself operating in her own "practical consciousness." I argue that this reduces a notion of rhetoric to the general, or generic, features of a rhetorical situation or text.

Examining the growing phenomenon of rhetorical analyses for sale at online plagiarism mills, Chapter Three ("Blessed Worlds: Rhetorical Analysis, General Equivalence, and Circulation") argues that there is often a "general equivalence" within the pedagogical practice of rhetorical analysis, which allows one assigned paper to often be easily exchanged for another classroom context. This possibility of "generic equivalence" is created through an underemphasis of the ways in which cultural texts circulate through the rhetor-analyst's own lived experience in an affective ecology. In an effort to explore another kind of "reading" practice, I use an affective literacy in order to explore the rhetorics of Austin's eastside that circulate in the city's popular discourses.

In Chapter Four, "Affect, Discourse, Knowledge," I shift emphases in order to discuss how meanings coalesce in public rhetoric; that is, how meanings are affectively produced in discourse. This chapter calls attention to the mutuality between affect and discursivity. Without collapsing the two, we can begin to see that rhetoric's operations involve a constant mutuality between affect and language insofar as we are never properly outside either dimension.

Finally, while each chapter addresses the pedagogical implications of conceptualizing culture within an "affective field," I conclude with a postscript that offers a close account a class I taught in the fall of 2004. This class attempted to teach rhetorically-grounded writing pedagogies that are attuned to the context of an affective cultural field. I explain how I designed my classes in order to teach rhetorical theory that is situated within what Williams calls "practical consciousness." I also use this postscript to discuss the larger implications of the previous chapters' theory for a writing classroom.

A CLOSING WORD ABOUT PLACES

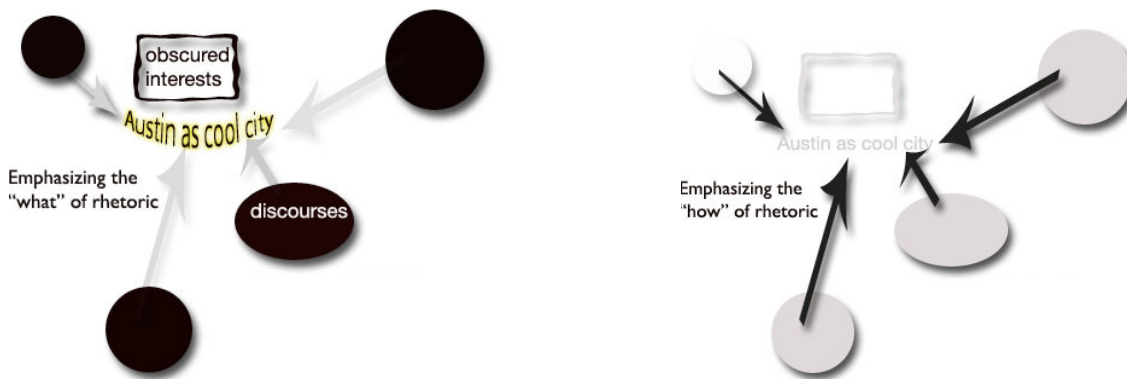
It is difficult for me to argue with the claim that Austin is a cool city. Perhaps this is why Austin serves as a central *topos* for me in this project. Each chapter weaves in and out of the city's discourses and rhetorics in order to test drive our theory. But it is not only coolness that has led me to start theorizing (in) this place. Rather, I have chosen Austin as a starting point because I cannot help but start here. I live in Austin, walk its streets every day, and have generated most of this project's theory while in Austin. My inclusion of the cityscape is more than nostalgia, however. Insofar as I am writing about bodies-in-relation and the affective field of culture, I find myself making an argument for the inseparability of experience from acts of meaning-making. In the course of writing, I have acted as an analyst. However, my (analyst's) body is a point of conduction between

my everyday life, my environments, and my thinking; I am incapable of separating out the parts of myself, since I am always in relation, in communion, with others. For this reason, my project's body-in-operation is rooted in a place called Austin.

Notes

¹ See the carefully documented and infamous “Ruins of Detroit,” for example.
<<http://detroityes.com/home.htm>>

² The difference between emphasizing the “what” and the “how” of rhetoric can be illustrated in the following images. While the first image emphasizes the elements of rhetoric—the various discourses, claims, and interests—the second image emphasizes the operations and movement of these elements. While the models of Austin’s “cool city” rhetoric retain the same framework, the difference is a matter of these emphases. Whereas the “what” of rhetoric identifies *that* there are obscured interests, for example, the “how” of rhetoric begins to theorize the circuits of operation through which certain interests get circumvented.



³ This emphasis upon the *how* of circulation is not without trouble, of course. When Gladwell spoke at The University of Texas in 2003, one of the first questions he received from the audience came from a consternated woman who expressed dissatisfaction at what she perceived as Gladwell's apolitical work. This critique was presumably launched from Gladwell's de-emphasis of the trends' content— its *what*— in favor of the mechanisms of their spread. As I argue below, this critique of apoliticalness is misguided.

⁴ While neither Ahmed nor Spinoza frame their theory in terms of “rhetoric,” we can make a compelling case for reading their work through rhetorical lenses.

⁵ Richard Lanham also theorized rhetoric's operability in terms of economies of attention. In *The Electronic Word*, Lanham explains that while we are in an “information economy,” this economy does not operate on a scarcity model. There is no rationing of our main commodity, information. “[W]e are drowning in information,” writes Lanham, “not suffering a death of it” (227). Indeed, there is plenty of information to go around for everyone: the Web, 24-hour news and talk radio, satellite, cell phones, wireless connections at every turn. Information is like a bottomless well. And for this very reason, Lanham continues, “the scarcest commodity turns out to be not information but the human attention needed to cope with it” (227). Moreover, he explains that rhetoric itself might be called the “‘economics of human-attention structures,’ for whenever we

‘persuade’ someone, we do so by getting that person to . . . share out attention structure” (227). In Lanham's theory, rhetoric is quite literally an attention-grabber, depending upon what we might call *sociality*. Like Burke, he points to the concept of phatic communication as a process of “creating social cohesion” (240). Our information economy circulates and allocates attention, which stands apart from the circulation of allocation of knowledge— or even belief. This is one theory of how rhetorics achieve adherence and intense movements in public. Stretching Lanham even further, therefore, we might argue that what is being generated, circulated, and culled in a persuasive rhetorical scene are degrees of energy. Persuasion thus becomes the function of generating and culling attention to various places.

⁶ See chapter one for an extended look at this very question. I borrow the phrase from Barry Glassner's book, *Culture of Fear*.

⁷ Alice Brand's significant research on the relations among cognition, emotion, and writing likewise reflects a psychological approach toward writing processes ("Social Cognition," "Hot Cognition," "Why").

⁸ My use of "freer places" should be qualified with the same caveat that Worsham herself uses. "I do not believe that the making of 'really free' places, lives, and identities is ever fully achieved or accomplished, though it remains the utopian goal of intellectual work . . ." ("Coming" 112).

⁹ Or, in the words of heavy metal group Gwar, I offer a theory that helps us find "a cool place to park."

Chapter One: Structures of Feelings and the Affective Field of Culture

Ghostly matters are part of social life. If we want to study social life well, and if in addition we want to contribute, in however small a measure, to changing it, we must learn how to make contact with that is without doubt often painful, difficult, and unsettling.
--Avery Gordon

STRUCTURES OF FEELING: EMERGENCE AND SUBMERGENCE

Standing high above the city from the World Trade Center, Michel de Certeau watches the pedestrians moving on the sidewalks below. These are the “practitioners” of the city, writes de Certeau; the ones who “follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it” (93). These walking bodies are in the process of writing culture through their trajectories, paths, habits, and avoidances. The stories composed through walking will become inscribed upon the city in any number of ways, constructing cultural maps and texts. However, de Certeau tells us that these bodies do not compose a story that can be read or even re/told: “The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments and alternations of spaces: *in relation to representation, it remains daily and indefinitely other*” (93, emphasis mine). While the city itself is said to be a representational space, then, we might say that the practice of the city (its being-walked) is both *in relation to* and *other than* representation. Watching the pedestrians from such a high vantage point surely must give a viewer (like de Certeau, standing on the World Trade Tower observation deck) a sense of observing the street scene in its fullness. It is tempting to see the city, or everyday life, in a kind of “imaginary totality” of representations and significations. But the walking refuses to be totalized or represented fully; those bodies, with their imperfections and strange rhythms, refuse to be fully

articulated. As de Certeau remarks, “There’s a certain strangeness that does not surface” within such a scene (93). The *being-walked* that comprises a city text never fully emerges under the watchful eye of the observer.

Much like the city street scene, culture is comprised of manifold stories and shaping fragments. Also like the city street, a theory of culture remains partial if it manages to tell stories but ignores the *strangeness* of walking. Yet, as Raymond Williams argues in his essay “Structures of Feeling,” this is precisely the problem with many analyses of cultural production. Too often they overlook the fact that culture is structured *in action*, and instead fix substances and practices into imaginary totalities that form “analytical wholes”:

[C]ontemporary life, in which relationships, institutions, and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes. Analysis is then centered on relations between these produced institutions, formations, and experiences, so that now, as in that produced past, only the fixed explicit forms exist, and living presence is always, by definition, receding. (128)

This “procedural mode” tends to convert live processes of everyday life (the being-walked) into a substantive representation. This conversion allows cultural scenes to be recognized in their manifold stories and representations. Williams himself argues that we most often recognize cultural scenes in their specificity and articulatability. According to Williams:

Social forms are evidently more recognizable when they are articulate and explicit. We have seen this in the range from institutions to formations and traditions. We can see it again in the range from dominant systems of belief and education to influential systems of explanation and argument. All these have effective presence. Many are formed and deliberate, and some are quite fixed. (130)

Our analyses are not misguided in reading cultural scenes in their relations of these forms, therefore. Nevertheless, Williams interjects, we know that culture is not always

already produced in ways that can be fully represented. There are present sensations of everyday life that remain *in relation to* but *other than* representation. Williams argues that culture is not exhausted in its explicit descriptions, insofar as there are elements of *presentness* and *ongoingness* that escape recognition: “[W]hen [social forms] have all been identified they are not a whole inventory even of social consciousness in its simplest sense. For they become social consciousness only when they are lived, actively, in real relationships, and moreover in relationships which are more than systematic exchanges between fixed units” (130). In other words, relationships of culture are more than relations between such *substances* as discourses, practices, formations, dominant arguments, meanings/significations, etc. They are also walked in-to-action.

There is an ongoingness to culture that is irreducibly fluid. This is what might be called, in a very vague sense, *the lived*. If we find ourselves talking about the social-cultural realm only in terms of formed, articulatable substances, our cultural theory suffers from a kind of imaginary totalization, much like the viewer from high above the World Trade Tower might claim to see the street scene below her in its fullness. She may see the bodies of the walkers—their paths, trajectories. Movements—yet such totalization fails to grasp the ways that the event of being-walked is lived *actively*, as well the ways its “present and moving” elements are felt (129). Similarly, Williams writes:

we have indeed to find other terms for the undeniable experience of the present: not only the temporal present, the realization of this and this instant, but the specificity of present being, the inalienably physical, within which we may acknowledge institutions, formations, positions, but not always as fixed products, defining products. (128)

Even if we could identify all the various relationships between formations and signifying meaning in a cultural scene, this identification would not exhaust the range and operation of culture. Like the event of being-walked, with its singular strangeness that

does not fully surface, culture is actively comprised through affective elements that remain implicit:

There are experiences to which fixed forms do not speak at all, which indeed they do not recognize. There are important mixed experiences, where the available meaning would convert part to all, or all to part. And even where form and response can be found to agree, . . . there can be qualifications, reservations, indications elsewhere: what the agreement seemed to settle but still sounding elsewhere. (130)

Much like walking resists being “recognized” fully, something within culture resists the critical impulse to be fully spoken in our analyses and explications. There is, as de Certeau says, a certain strangeness that does not surface. However, we cannot take such unrepresentability as evidence that this experience is not real. “[T]he actual alternative to the received and produced fixed forms is not silence. . . . It is a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange,” explains Williams (131). Culture is a complicated interrelationship between fixed formations and the inexplicit thinking-feeling that vibrates around those formations. Williams calls the latter operation “structures of feeling,” which are (pre)emergent forces that “do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures” on everyday life (132). This pre-emergent cultural dimension might also be described as the affective field of culture.

Extending Williams’ theory, we discover two orders within culture’s affective field. One order is of the “fixed explicit forms” that are often identified in cultural analyses. These are the institutions, formations, positions, substances, relations, significations, and meanings that emerge in recognizable ways (even if they are obscured by ideological mystifications). But the other order is of those “experiences to which fixed forms do not speak at all.” Williams suggests that the doubleness of these orders makes it

impossible for us to read culture as a combination of discrete substances. While relations between formations and discourses do exist, culture is not (only) a matter of linked forms in combinations: *those discourses linked with that practice linked with this formation*. The missing element in many analyses, according to Williams, is the lived, in-processness of these relations. Culture is not just a matter *of* practices, but it *is practiced*. Moreover, the lived practice of culture's explicit relations exposes something that does not coincide with the practices or forms themselves. Recall de Certeau and his street watching: the walked "text" of the everyday city is not the same as the practice of walking. There is a strangeness that does not surface.

To depart from the street for a moment, we might borrow another analogy from Etta James: *Life is like a song*. Take any song at all as example. The music is a matter of discrete, formed substances: notes, beats, time signature, instruments, etc. But when these substances are *played*—only when they are put into practice—they become something else. They become a song when put into action and lived. The relations exist as much as they ever did, but now the in-process itself has passed into another order. When I see the sheet music to "Hey Joe," for example, I do not get the same experience of the song as when I put on a record to hear Hendrix play. And, by the same token, when I listen to Hendrix play, I no longer hear those individual elements that are in a real relation to one another. It is possible to experience the same song along two different orders.¹

Though he is miles away from "Hey Joe," Williams suggests much the same experience within culture. Williams identifies what he calls a "practical consciousness [which] is what is actually being lived" in everyday life and the social (131). Once again, this practical consciousness is social and material without being fully emergent in explicable, articulatable ways. As Williams writes, "We are talking about . . . affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as

felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity” (132). Culture involves social feeling that is ongoing and never fully say-able in explicitly discursive or signifying ways. It is a “social content [that] is in a significant number of cases of this present and affective kind, which cannot with loss be reduced to belief systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships, though it may include all these *as lived*” (133; emphasis mine). Culture—like the bodies that walk along city streets or the song that I play over and over—cannot be reduced to the substantive elements and relations that comprise it. “Hey Joe” is a matter of practical consciousness, which is why I cannot experience the song in the same way by reading the sheet music. I must experience the process itself.

It may seem like walking is a strange way to begin a discussion of cultural orders, yet walking bodies have much to teach us about the operation of culture. Walking itself is a matter of relationality between body, cognition, sensation, street, other bodies, and the environment. Walking happens in a kind of ecology of relations and operationality—never just in the explicit representation of its movements, trajectories, and style. Walking is a thoroughly practiced event of being (and moving) in the world. Similarly, Williams’ emphasis on practical consciousness recalls a Heideggerian sense of being-in-the-world as the primary condition of Being. Turning to Heidegger’s discussion of Da-sein, for example, we find that Being is nothing if not Being-With (or *Mitsein* in Heidegger’s original terminology). Heidegger writes:

Da-sein in itself is essentially being-with. The phenomenological statement that Da-sein is essentially a being-with has an existential-ontological meaning. It does not intend to ascertain ontically that I am factually not objectively present alone, rather that others of my kind also are. . . . Being-with existentially determines Da-sein even when an other is not factually present and perceived. The being-alone of Da-sein, too, is being-with in the world. (113)

To say that the world is a with-world, therefore, does not refer to the physical presence of subjects or bodies. Being may indeed be a being-with-others, yet Heidegger insists that these others “are not encountered first by looking at oneself and then ascertaining the opposite pole of distinction. They are encountered from the *world* in which Da-sein, heedful and circumspect, essentially dwells” (112). In other words, Da-sein (as Being) is what we have come to describe as thoroughly *situated*. We are never outside of a particular structure of sociality and events, time and locations. That is, we are situated with-in world. As Heidegger explains, “Da-sein . . . finds ‘itself’ in *what* it does, . . . in the things at hand which it initially *takes care of* in the surrounding world” (112). Heidegger’s discussion of *Mitsein* exposes the primary and irreducibly social aspect of Being. I *am* to the extent that I am comprised of relations, networks, and structures of sociality: I *am* insofar as I am situated.

Heidegger makes clear that *Mitsein* is not about being with other subjects or fixed elements in a physical or substantive way. “Being-with-one-another cannot be understood as a summative result of the occurrence of several subjects,” he writes (118). Following a discussion by Jean-Luc Nancy’s essay “Of Being-in-Common,” Diane Davis explains, “The *mit* ought not be thought of as modifying the *sein* nor qualifying the Dasein. . . . The *mit* . . . is not a modifier but rather what ‘constitutes’ the *Dasein* ‘essentially’” (191). Being-with is not an accumulation of proximate subjects or objects. Rather Da-sein *is* to the extent that it *operates in the world*. *Mitsein* is nothing other than its operation in world, which is what constitutes it in a primacy of sociality and relations. Being-with is a primary situatedness in the world. To say that culture is actively lived in “real relations” can, at one level, be understood as a restatement of being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is a lived process similar to how Williams posits the practical consciousness enacted by structures of feeling. *Mitsein* first “takes care” through dwelling in-the-world

(an implicit operation) before it the “sees” discrete, proximate subjects or objects in an explicit way.

Similarly, Williams develops a theory of culture that is an active operation between an explicit order and an implicit order. The explicit order is the realm of representation, definability. But the implicit order is an order of situatedness, of operating primarily in felt sensations and lived experiences of culture. According to Williams, our attention is generally focused on the first order. “Thus we speak of a world-view or of a prevailing ideology or of a class outlook,” he writes, “often with adequate evidence, but. . . do not know that . . . these exist and are lived specifically and definitively in singular and developing forms” (129). To contextualize Williams’ argument in Heidegger’s terms: our readings of culture too often begin in substantive relations of explicit, proximate subjects. We first ascertain “poles of distinction,” rather than beginning in the heedful dwelling that is in operation within practical consciousness. We focus on the *substances* that are found within the lived experience, but tend to overlook *experience as such*. The fact that culture is a matter of practical consciousness, however, means that we cannot focus on the explicit order at the expense of the implicit. Both orders exist *in tandem* within culture. This is why Williams argues for a theory of *structures of feeling*: insofar as the world is a with-world, culture is structured along the operation of both orders. In culture, things both surface and remain strangely submergent.

THE EXPLICIT ORDER

Williams tells us that cultural analyses makes social forms recognizable through processes of articulation and explication. The explicit order has a revealing function: it identifies what social forms represent. In short, this cultural order makes social forms *speak* by articulating signifying meaning in discourse. We do not have to travel far to find

an example of how the explicit order gets emphasized in both cultural theory and pedagogy. Nowhere is explication more revered than in school, where the call to “Be explicit!” has become almost a cardinal rule. In fact, Strunk and White’s beloved *Elements of Style* does indeed make explicitness a cherished rule of writing when they issue the demand for “Clarity, clarity, clarity” (79). With tongue in cheek (though not too far in cheek), Strunk and White warn students against writing with anything less than full explicitness:

Muddiness is not merely a destroyer of prose, it is also a destroyer of life, of hope, death on the highway caused by a badly worded road sign. . . . [T]hink of the tragedies that are rooted in ambiguity, think of that side, and be clear! *When you say something, make sure you have said it.* (80, emphasis mine)

Explicitness is the rule for survival in school. As Strunk and White suggest, the alternative is ugly, dangerous, and undesirable. The clarity/ambiguity binary has come to be a pedagogical imperative for school writing; every “good” student learns that “good writing” means *clear, concise, explicit* writing that leaves nothing ambiguous.² If we had any doubts about whether the binary still operates, we would only need to look to the margins of student papers, which continue to be marred by the standard (and quite ambiguous) teacher comment “Not clear!” Indeed, Strunk and White’s “clarity, clarity, clarity” still rules the day. If ever the explicit order had a home, it almost certainly would be housed in a schoolroom.

But while Strunk and White’s rules of clarity might seem to be an extreme school version of the explicit order, we find that the injunction to “make sure you have said it” reverberates at a much more serious level in cultural analysis. Even when rejecting *Elements of Style*’s belief in transparency of meaning via clarity, the impulse to make culture “say what it says” remains strong in some practices of critical cultural theory. Much like the student writing that Strunk and White imagine, a good cultural analysis

contains no ambiguities, no muddiness. We see traces of this tendency, for example, in the work of Stuart Hall, who maintains that culture is primarily about meaning. In addressing various approaches of cultural studies, Hall suggests that the particular method does not matter as long as “its internal paradigms are critical of the structures of the culture that it's studying, and ha[s] a concern about the articulation between cultural and aesthetic matters, *which are always questions of symbolic form*, and social matters which are always questions of organised power, and so on” (Karvonen and Koivisto; emphasis mine). Hall supposes culture in any aspect is textualized to a certain extent, making it available for cultural analysis. While Hall admits that there are non-discursive elements of cultural artifacts and practices, he relegates this sphere to a secondary, non-constitutive function:

For me, I don't know what I would study if I weren't studying meaning. I mean I know that you know meaning is a very complicated thing and that it works on the emotions and they are unconscious, so it doesn't work just on the rational, cognitive side. So I don't have a limited conception of it, but I do think culture is about meaning. . . . [Some think] culture is beyond meaning, it includes the area beyond meaning. And that I suppose is where we have a different emphasis.
(Karvonen and Koivisto)

In talking about culture, Hall tends to emphasize a specific order: representable, explicable, and meaning-full. Culture extends only as far as meaning extends. Or, better said, there is no *significant* realm of culture beyond meaning. Hall's version of cultural analysis imagines that we can “say what it says.” Culture operates in a realm of meanings that are open “to study,” in Hall's words. This suggests that insofar as culture is primarily about meaning, our work is to make that meaning explicit in the articulation of culture's symbolic forms and structures.

It should not be too surprising that we also find an emphasis on the explicit order in rhetoric and composition. On one hand, there is the Strunk and White-style clarity imperative that still runs strong throughout composition pedagogy. (“Be clear!”) Yet, in more sophisticated areas of composition and rhetorical theory that are concerned with cultural critique, we find an emphasis on the meaning-full realm of culture that Hall indicates. No doubt this due to the fact that cultural meaning is said to be constructed and made explicit through discourse. Indeed, one of the most hopeful promises of rhetoric is its explanatory power of the world. (As C. H. Knoblauch puts it, “All human beings are ‘rhetors’ because they naturally conceive as well as share their knowledge of the world by means of discourse” (29).) The tie between discourse and cultural explication figures prominently in the work of James Berlin, who repeatedly argues that “[l]anguage . . . is one of the material and social conditions involved in producing a culture. This means that in studying rhetoric—the ways discourse is generated—we are studying the ways in which knowledge comes into existence” (“Rhetoric and Ideology” 488-489). In studying rhetorical theory, therefore, composition engages in the very “study” that Hall promotes: the study of culture as symbolic and representational forms. It is in language that we live, says Berlin, and our “experiences are mediated through signifying practices. Only through language do we know and act upon the conditions of our experience. Ways of living and dying are finally negotiated through discourse, the cultural codes that are part of our historical conditions. . .” (“Poststructuralism” 21). For Berlin, as for Hall, culture is discursively articulatable.

The growing interest of composition with cultural studies likewise reflects this tendency to explicitly read both culture and rhetoric in terms of discursivity. John Schilb connects composition and cultural studies through a common interest in textuality. “Composition can embody the preoccupation with discourse associated with cultural studies and postmodernism,” he writes. “Both have evoked various cultural phenomena as texts; hence, a field identified with broad textual inquiry seems relevant to them” (“Cultural Studies” 176). The Marxist methodology employed by some cultural studies approaches also reflects a common interest in discursivity. As Patricia Bizzell argues, “The value of Marxist work lies in its ability to offer methodologically sophisticated and ethically informed modes of social analysis, especially analysis of language use in the construction and control of knowledge” (“Marxist” 56). The relationship between cultural studies and composition, in other words, seems to be a “natural fit” insofar as both lines of scholarship employ a dialectical approach among discourse, materiality, and culture.³ Rhetoric and composition’s expanding connection into cultural studies reflects the fields’ proclivity for viewing rhetoric primarily in terms of discourse.

What we find in these theories is a tendency to equate rhetoric and culture with the explicit order by making discursive meaning a central mode of production. Or, rather, according to John Trimbur, the central point of analysis becomes the production of meaning in many cultural studies models. Trimbur argues that in the late 80s and 90s, a kind of cultural studies approach employing close reading and demystification took hold throughout English departments and the humanities as a whole. These approaches advanced criticism as a mode of interpretation, very close to literary analysis, which emphasized reading the contents of culture in their meaningful productions. As Trimbur describes these cultural studies models: “[W]riting teachers emphasized close readings of cultural texts—ideological critiques with the goal of providing students the interpretive

and evaluative tools to be discriminating readers and to resist the dominant culture by demystifying the media and everyday ‘common sense’” (198). While Trimbur is sympathetic to this goal, he argues that a focus on the production of meaning marks only one moment of a text’s circulation. Citing Richard Johnson, Trimbur concludes:

“Processes . . . disappear in results,” which was very much the case, I believe, to make ideological critique and the interpretive essay into the main vehicles of cultural studies in the writing classroom. While a sector of students learned to do sophisticated readings of a wide variety of cultural texts, the circulation of cultural products receded from view and become unavailable for analysis. (199)

Likewise, looking to the overlapping work of Hall and Berlin, Trimbur argues that both theorists tend to overemphasize meaning production at the expense of circulation:

[F]or Hall, as well as Berlin, the literary legacy of cultural studies and its residual textualism continue to weigh heavily on their work, and the acts of encoding and decoding . . . remain privileged moments of analysis without adequate attention to the systems through which cultural products and media messages circulate or the transformations they thereby undergo. (203)

In other words, meaning production is not the only way that a text engages culture. In Trimbur’s theory, it also circulates and moves through particular cultural channels. This circulation is not necessarily “read” in the same way that a meaning-full interpretation is “read,” however. To reduce culture to discourse is to miss the ways that culture is generated through various processes. In Trimbur’s words, this is the specter of “textualism” that weighs on the work of Berlin and Hall.

The consequence of a conflation between culture and discourse thus tends to be a removal of rhetoric from material realms of culture. Jack Selzer makes this point when he encourages us to attune our scholarship to materiality as a lived experience of everyday life. “[E]specially during this period of social constructionism and a heightened awareness of the power of language to mediate perception,” Selzer writes, “the brute fact of materiality has been shunted a bit to the side. At least in some communities . . . a

respect for how reality is constructed by language has mitigated interest in what Maurice Merleau-Ponty called ‘the lived world’” (4). Selzer raises the possibility that our tendency to tie *culture* to *discourse* ignores something important—something irreducible language that still has an effect in the world. In other words, Selzer suggests that culture may not be the sum of its articulations, but that it instead takes place at a level other than the explicit, representational dimensions of meaning. Therefore, we might expand our analyses by examining the existence of another order, one that is *in relation to* and *other than* representation. We do not have to choose between the realm of discourse *or* the extra-discursive. Instead of conceiving of these two positions as a binary, it is possible to see them as two orders of the same field: an explicit and an implicit order of culture. This re-emphasis echoes Lynn Worsham suggestion that we remember “what moves discourse, what moves through meaning is untranslatable, unrepresentable, irrecoverable within discourse” (“Writing” 89). Whereas Berlin and Hall emphasize the explicit order (through a focus of symbolic meaning, discursivity, signification, representation), we might also begin to emphasize an implicit order.

VOCABULARY PROBLEMS: IMPLICIT ORDER

The implicit order is difficult to talk about. The problem lies in finding a vocabulary with which to discuss such affective fields of culture. Williams identifies this bind as a need to recognize structures of feeling without reducing them into substantive, fixed (and explicable) forms. He writes:

We need, on the one hand, to acknowledge (and welcome) the specificity of these elements—specific feelings, specific rhythms—and yet to find ways of recognizing their specific kinds of sociality, thus preventing that extraction from social experience which is conceivable only when social experience itself has been categorically (and at root historically) reduced. (133)

The challenge to cultural theory is to develop means of evoking such affective operation of the implicit order without falling back upon representable, explicable concepts. This is not to say that there is something wrong with the realm of representation—only that representation itself is partial. It is only one order of culture, one whose realm of representation does not exhaust the cultural field as a lived, practiced engagement. The specificity of these affective rhythms cannot be extracted from their operability: their *eventness*, their being-in-the-world. We will have to proceed cautiously.

The caution comes from our heavy investment in the explicit order of culture. We tend to traffic quite heavily in discursive meanings and representations. As Brian Massumi argues, while “affect is central to an understanding of our information- and image-based late capitalist culture, . . . [t]he problem is that there is no cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect. Our entire vocabulary has been derived from theories of signification. . . .” (*Parables* 27). There is no vocabulary specific to the implicit, affective order of culture. Given that affect and affective operations in culture are asignifying, they remain strangely submergent, our attempts to make it a signifying object (or many signifying objects) will fail to uncover the thorough “text” of culture. Williams makes this point when he warns against turning lived, practical consciousness of culture into abstractions that, while explicit and recognizable, reduce “the known complexities, the experienced tensions, shifts, and uncertainties, the intricate forms of unevenness and confusion” to meaning-full substances (ideologies, discourse, significations) that can be cognitively explicated (129). In the course of such an abstraction, we will have made those complexities pass into something else—another order—altogether. “[P]ractical consciousness is what is actually being lived, and not only what is thought is being lived,” Williams reminds us (131). Recall de Certeau’s walkers and the two orders at work: walking itself cannot be explicated or discursively

represented without passing into another order of meaning. The “practical consciousness” of walking disappears in the move of explication.

In order to describe the affective field of culture, we often find ourselves scrambling for more familiar terrain: what seems to be the closest, most recognizable approximation. According to Massumi, this scramble has usually meant that we fall back upon the language of emotion, personal expression, or subjectivity. “In the absence of an asignifying philosophy of affect,” he writes, “it is all too easy for received psychological categories to slip back in, undoing the considerable deconstructive work that has been effectively carried out by poststructuralism” (*Parables* 27). Our dependence upon “emotion” as a conceptual, categorical way of reading affect falls flat for the very reasons that Williams warns against: it reduces the operation to a substance. Emotions, for instance, are one kind of reduction. “An emotion is a subjective *content*, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of experience which is from that point onward defined as personal,” writes Massumi (*Parables* 28; emphasis mine). Emotion is narrativized and able to be made explicit. It is an object that has been formed by the operations of cultural-historical processes.⁴ Yet, the affective forces that move through discourse—what Worsham calls the “untranslatable, unrepresentable, irrecuperable” force—“exceed any system’s power of recuperation” (“Writing” 92). The implicit force of affect changes into something else (passes into the explicit order) once it becomes recuperated into an articulation: emotion, taste, personal expression. Affect is not “ownable” in these terms, which means that we cannot understand it better if we make it pass into a recognizable, articulated form.

At the same time, to say that culture’s implicit and affective order is not representable does not mean that we must avoid discussing structures of feeling. We can still point to the operation itself through an evocative observation, one that does not then

attempt to make the observation pass into an epistemological object: something cognitively known, conceptualized, and thoroughly languaged. The matter is simply one of an irreconcilable problem: our challenge is to create a vocabulary that does not seek to conceptualize or turn culture into an imaginary totality; a vocabulary that does not traffic exclusively in epistemology. Such a vocabulary recalls what de Certeau calls the art of theory:

A particular problem arises when, instead of being a discourse on other discourses, as is usually the case, theory has to advance over an area where there are no longer any discourses. There is a sudden unevenness in the terrain: the ground on which verbal language rests begins to fail. The theorizing operation finds itself at the limits of the terrain where it normally begins to function, like an automobile at the edge of a cliff. Beyond and below lies the ocean. (61)

Our talk about structures of feeling, then, will be a theory-art and less of an epistemological means of classification. As de Certeau suggests, our discourse will become suddenly quite rocky when it traverses that area where there are no discourses.

Rather than concluding that we must be *silent* in the face of this terrain, therefore, we can simply begin to think of an affective vocabulary that has no final resting place. We find ourselves, like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick says in *Touching Feeling*, seeking to expose “the aspects of experience and reality that do not present themselves in propositional or even in verbal form alongside others that do. . . .” (6). It leaves the solidity of a concept’s ground in order to float (away) with the ocean. A vocabulary of structures of feeling makes no claims to get the truth of affect (or a “full picture”). Instead, it can only hope to evoke and trace affect’s operation in culture. With this in mind, we might attempt to make some observations about the affective field of culture and its two orders. Perhaps the best way to address the difference, as well as their in-tandem operation, is to explore how these two levels *register* differently in culture. As we have seen in the above discussion, the explicit order registers in cognition, discourse,

signifying meaning, interpretation, perception, and epistemology. It registers at the point of emergence into what has most often been called “knowledge,” although we may want to approach that term very carefully. The implicit order, however, registers at the level of sensation, body, affect, intensities, and lived experience. By exploring these two different *registers* of culture, we may come to see how culture is a complex interaction of both orders: a social field structured in feeling.

TWO DIFFERENT REGISTERS

The doubleness of culture matters insofar as each order registers differently across the field of culture. While the implicit order of culture is palpable, it does not show up at the level of definition, cognition, classification, or rationalization. Take the realm of the visual, for instance. As Massumi argues in "The Autonomy of Affect," the event of image reception is multi-level: there is a level of intensity and a level of qualification. Whereas qualification is the image's "indexing to conventional meanings in an intersubjective context, its sociolinguistic qualification," an image's intensity is "the strength or duration of the image's effect. . . ." (24). For example, Massumi describes an experiment undertaken by researchers after a short, wordless film on German television raised a number of complaints from parents about the film's tendency to scare children. The film itself, which was originally nothing but filler between programs, was seemingly innocuous: a man builds a snowman, and, after it begins to melt in the sun, drives it to the mountains. There he drops off the snowman and leaves. This scene is silly, perhaps, but hardly the kind of thing worth getting all *emotional* about—and hardly the kind of film that one usually would identify as being frightening to children. In their experiments, researchers showed different versions of the short film to children: a wordless version, a version that narrated the man's emotional states at various points, and a factually narrated

version. They wired the children to measure various physiological levels, and asked for responses to the film. (Is this version happy or sad? Is this version pleasant or unpleasant? Which one do you remember the most?) As Massumi writes, the children found the original wordless version most *pleasant*. Oddly enough, the children also rated this wordless version as the *saddest* one. The saddest version was the most pleasant. The physiological results are also strange, Massumi points out. “[F]actuality made their heart beat faster and deepened their breathing, but it also made their skin resistance fall” (*Parables* 24).

But why would the brain race while the skin is bored? Massumi suggests that these different functions arise from their relation to expectation. Because the heart-brain positions itself within narrative and cognitive continuity, “[m]odulations of heartbeat and breathing mark a reflux of consciousness into the autonomic depths, coterminous with a rise of the autonomic into consciousness” (*Parables* 25). But intensity—the skin flicks—jumps outside the narrative/cognitive line. Intensity disrupts the linear lines of narrative. The pleasure of intensity is a jump cut, a jolt, a shock that exists on the surface of signification. Judging from such empirical scenes, Massumi concludes that “[d]eepth reactions belong more to the form/content (qualification) level. . . . The reason may be that they are associated with expectation, which depends on consciously positioning oneself in a line of narrative continuity” (25). The qualification-meaning level of an image's reception, in other words, relates to *expectation*. Yet, the intensity level, which registers on the skin, “is outside expectation and adaptation. . . . It is narratively delocalized, spreading over the generalized body surface like a lateral backwash from the function-meaning interloops that travel the vertical path between head and heart” (25). The level of intensity in image reception is something *other than* expectation. Indeed, writes Massumi, “[i]ntensity would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes:

resonation and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future" (26). Intensity is a disruption of the indexing of qualification.

Likewise, in his work on audience shock in early cinema, Tom Gunning identifies the qualitative overspill working on the bodies of astonished moviegoers. Audiences watching Lumiere's *Arrival of a Train*, for instance, cried out in fright and jumped from their chairs as the black and white train rushed towards the screen. Why did they jump? Why did they cry out in the darkness of a theater? Gunning points out that some film historians chalk this reaction to the audience's inability to distinguish reality from celluloid imagery: viewers believed the train could burst through the theater at any moment. But Gunning challenges this explanation. Audiences were not naïve, he says, but rather incredibly aware of the film's illusory existence. Audience shock at seeing Lumiere's train reflected a fissure between what they knew to be true and what they actually saw. I know and yet I see. There is the indexed register and the affective (skin) level of intensity that reverberates with the index/head level. These two levels can be in sync—or, as often happens, they can be strangely divergent: I know and yet I see. I know and yet I feel.

This seeming disjunct between brain and heart also shows up in more empirical contexts. Consider neurobiologist Antonio Damasio's experiment on emotional recall, where subjects were asked to remember a very powerful emotional experience. Damasio and fellow experimenters asked the subjects to signal as soon as they began to feel the emotion. Similar to the snowman film experiment that Massumi describes, these subjects were monitored for a variety of physiological measurements, including heart and skin conductance, and brain activity. In addition to finding that body states registered a physical change when the emotion was felt, Damasio and researchers discovered something a bit more unexpected: "We were able to note that *the changes in skin*

conductance always preceded the signal that a feeling was being felt. In other words, the electrical monitors registered the seismic activity of emotion unequivocally *before* the subjects moved their hands to indicate the experience had begun” (101). Damasio concludes that this discovery shows that affective dimensions preceded cognition or consciousness. Before we have the opportunity to tell a story, to narrativize and contextualize the scene at hand, a bodily intensity has already registered.

We now arrive at an important observation about the affective field of culture: the implicit order has palpable effect by registering bodily intensity that does not coincide with cognition. On one hand, we can see the cognitive, representational, conscious, and meaning-full level of the explicit. This is the realm where epistemology hangs its hat, insofar as Western philosophy has often claimed that we *know* things at this level/register. But there is also a felt, sensual, non-cognitive, intense level of affect. While Western culture has long recognized a split between rationality and emotion, these two orders are neither hierarchized as in this old binary, nor is affect rendered as a function of (primary) rationality. In fact, as both Massumi and Damasio argue, the implicit intensity of affect may actually precede cognition and “rational” functions. Furthermore, the double order diverges from a rationality/emotive binary in that the two orders both *structure* culture differently through their unique registers.

Understandably, this observation has significance for a number of different groups interested in persuasion and rhetorical movement. A growing number of psychologists, design theorists, and marketers have begun to delve deeply into the impact of this situation, and its *usefulness* aspects of consumer culture. In his widely read *Emotional Design*, for example, popular writer and cognitive psychologist Donald Norman discusses what he calls “visceral design,” which operates at a register somewhat different from the cognitive or conscious level. Effective visceral design of a certain

object engages the senses: it is touchable and the touch feels good. “Shape and form matter,” says Norman. “The physical feel and texture of the materials matter. Heft matters. Visceral design is all about immediate emotional impact. It has to feel good, look good” (69). This kind of design makes its “appeal” directly to the body, according to Norman, which responds through a kind of sensual *attraction* or *repulsion*:

In the best of circumstances, the visceral reaction to appearance works so well that people take one look and say “I want it.” Then they might ask, “What does it do?” And last, “How much does it cost?” This is the reaction the visceral designer strives for, and it can work. (68)

Norman looks to such successful visceral designs as the introduction of colorful Apple iMac computers. With their smooth, rounded plastic cases and their *flavorful* colors (featuring names like “blueberry” and “tangerine”), the iMacs proved to be much better sellers than their identical machines encased in plainer cases. No particular claims were made as to the improved performance of the iMac, Norman points out, but it did look much more appealing. It suddenly became the kind of thing you wanted to touch. And that was “reason” enough for Apple’s sales to skyrocket. The implicit, intense register is thus overwhelmingly palpable.

The everyday is filled with such examples of the mutuality between these two orders. We experience both registers all the time. Few theorists have explored this double register in culture more carefully than Lawrence Grossberg, who turns to the example of rock music and the listener’s body in order to expose the import of intensity/sensation and the affective field’s multi-level event. For Grossberg, the music fan’s particular ways of relating to rock discloses something important about meaning. “If not every meaning is a representation,” he writes, “and not every text has representational effects, it may also be true that texts may have effects other than meaning-effects, and meanings, interpretations, uses and pleasures may themselves have additional effects” (45). It is not

just that a single text possesses a number of possible interpretations, therefore, but also that a text's effects extend beyond what is uncovered in signification. "Indeed, any exclusive emphasis on analyzing meaning undercuts our ability to describe . . . the immediate sensuous relation to the popular and to the everyday," Grossberg suggests, "both of which are organized around the body" ("Teaching" 182). As he goes on to explain, "[M]usic often bypasses meaning altogether to act directly on the body of the listener. Sometimes the production of meaning may be little more than a distraction" (1992 52). We might slightly rewrite Grossberg's hypothesis by saying that texts—rock music, for example—have meaning beyond semantic, representable, cognitive, or narrative meaning. Texts have meaning beyond signification. Representation is not somehow *untrue* or *unimportant*; it simply does not exhaust the range of culture's operations. To textualize the world *as representation* is to remove the in-process of culture: what we might call its *liveness*. Rather than aiming to correct a "false" reading of culture-as-text, therefore, Williams and Grossberg suggest a (re)new(ed) emphasis on the affective, *live* elements of culture. The emphasis on structures of feeling is not a correction as much as a shifted focus on what already exists in/as culture.

For Grossberg, the bigger point is not that rock music *per se* is especially affective, but rather that culture itself is "organized" through an affective field. Grossberg explains, "Affect operates across all of our senses and experiences, across all of the domains of effects which construct daily life. Affect is what gives 'color,' 'tone,' or 'texture' to the lived" (*We Gotta Get Out* 80-81). The fact that rock music has an affective dimension prevents us from reducing it to a text that can be completely explicated or identified. Indeed, Grossberg continues, culture itself is similarly enmeshed in affective relations, which "always involve a quantitatively variable level of energy (activation, enervation) that binds an articulation or that binds an individual to a

particular practice” (1992 82). Affect implies a kind of energetics, an intensity, to culture that cannot be textualized. Culture operates at an affective level, in addition to the more explicit, meaning-full levels that we often come to discuss.

The tendency to see *cultural practices* in terms of significations, representations, codes, and discursive negotiations leaves out something important: the lived, the felt. In short, it leaves out sensation and affect. Echoing Williams, Grossberg argues that cultural structures of feeling, or the social’s affective fields, play a major part in everyday life; there is no “everyday life” that operates apart from affect. Neither is culture merely the extent of identifiable structures that appear in the realm of the symbolic. Grossberg argues that both academic and popular ways of identifying culture with symbolic communication have rendered "the reduction of culture to texts and of human reality to the plane of meaning. The analysis of culture then involves the interpretation of cognitive, semantic or narrative content which lies hidden within the text" (*We Gotta Get Out* 43). The problem with this analysis, according to Grossberg, is that the plane of semantic meaning is not the only plane in which we live. Grossberg goes on to explain that culture operates in the field of affect. "Affect identifies the strength of the investment which anchors people in particular experiences, practices, identities, meanings and pleasures," he explains, "but it also determines how invigorated people feel at any moment of their lives, their level of energy or passion" (*We Gotta Get Out* 81-82). Consequently, social energy and feeling are invested into particular scenes, structuring and anchoring culture in affective ways. "The power of affect derives, not from its content, but from the fact that it is always the vector of people’s investment in reality," writes Grossberg (*We Gotta Get Out* 104-105). Like Williams, Grossberg points to the operation of culture that cannot be articulated in (or as) discursive formations, substances, or formations. Culture *registers* at more than one level.

IN-TANDEM REGISTERS

At this point, the specter of subjectivism is sure to raise its head. Does such an emphasis on affect, sensation, and the implicit dimensions of culture imply a romantic siding with *nature* instead of *culture*? Are we simply suggesting that we turn our attention to the “natural” realm of body and matter—a realm somehow prior to or outside of culture? That is, could this unmediated dimension of culture merely repackage the myth of a more natural body that has yet to be touched by the *techne* of cultural constructions? These questions raise legitimate concerns about an “unmediated materiality,” which is why we might want to simultaneously attempt to reformulate the nature-culture binary that has long underscored discussions of culture. Massumi suggests that we come to understand these two terms as part of a continuum, as opposed to two distinct categories. This continuum cannot polarize nature and culture as two points of extremity (as if we could locate a material practice as “more” cultural or “more” natural). Rather, he explains:

the “natural” and the “cultural” feed forward and back into each other. They relay each other to such an extent that the distinction cannot be maintained in any strict sense. . . . Logical operations prolong and convert forces already in nature, and forces of nature divert into cultural operations normatively regulated (ruled) by the logical conversion. (*Parables* 11)

The “nature” of sensation resonates with the “culture” of mediated discursive constructions. “Nature and culture are in mutual movement into and through each other,” Massumi writes. “Their continuum is a dynamic unity of reciprocal variation” (*Parables* 11). We must note that such resonance is different from Berlin’s formulation, which supposes that materiality and culture are mutually shaping in discourse. While Massumi’s continuum/feedback model does not ignore the discursive and mediated mutuality, it also emphasizes the mutuality of sensation. That is, unmediated sensation feeds into cultural

mediations, just as culturally-structured practices can generate sensations that do not coincide with coded meaning.

Roland Barthes has also shown how these multiple orders operate in-tandem with one another. Speaking in terms of the image, Barthes points us toward three levels of meaning surrounding the same object. The first two address the informational level (which is the level of semantic communication) and the symbolic level (which addresses signification). These two meaning-full levels form what Barthes calls a kind of "obvious meaning" to the scene itself. But, he continues, signifiers with their attendant significations are not all there is: "I am still held by the image. I read, I receive (and probably even first and foremost) a third meaning—evident, erratic, obstinate" ("Third" 318). This third meaning exceeds the existence of the scene itself in its informational and even symbolic dimensions. Whereas informational and symbolic levels of the image are remainderless—every gesture matches a corresponding meaning—the third meaning is total excess. The third meaning is the "one 'too many,' the supplement that my intellect cannot succeed in absorbing, at once persistent and fleeting, smooth and elusive" ("Third" 320). There is, in other words, an affective intensity to text and image that is not exhausted in signification.

An obtuse shadow exists in proximity to the figure's signifying meaning. Furthermore, this obtuseness cracks up a pure event of signification. Barthes asks:

Do [obtuse meanings] not give the obvious signified a kind of difficult prehensible roundness, cause my reading to slip? An obtuse angle is greater than a right angle: . . . the third meaning also seems perpendicular of the narrative, it seems to open the field of meaning totally, that is infinitely. . . . [T]he obtuse meaning appears to extend outside culture, knowledge, information; . . . it belongs to the family of pun, buffoonery, useless expenditure. ("Third" 320)

As Barthes explains, the obtuse exists outside of critical metalanguage. It is "outside (articulated) language while nevertheless within interlocution. . . . [W]e can agree on it

'over the shoulder' or 'on the back' of articulated language" (326). While a "semantologist would not agree to its objective existence," therefore, the obtuse takes on a life almost as a reverberation of meaning-full signification (326). The obtuse is not apart from meaning, but rather inheres in it as a constant dense reminder of the body. "[T]he obtuse meaning can be seen as an *accent*," Barthes writes, "the very form of an emergence, of a fold (a crease even) marking the heavy layer of informations and significations. . . . [It is] a sort of gash rased of meaning" (327). Such third meanings or obtuse meaning are a kind of reverberation in the gestures of signification. As an accent (the peculiar accent of meaning and mediated discourse), affective intensity shadows, disrupts, and even helps to shape signification itself. We should therefore note, as Barthes points out, that such an accent "does not even indicate an *elsewhere* of meaning (another content, added to the obvious meaning); it outplays meaning—subverts not the content, but the whole practice of meaning" (328). This sense refuses to properly signify, and it cannot be pulled back into the realm of informational meaning and re/cognition.

These multiple levels do not merely happen in terms of image reception, however. "Language belongs to entirely different orders depending on which redundancy it enacts," writes Massumi, "Or, it always enacts both more or less completely: two languages, two dimensions of every expression, one superlinear, the other linear. *Every event takes place on both levels. . . .*" (*Parables* 26; emphasis mine). Massumi calls these two halves *expectation* and *suspense*. On one hand there is the expectation of the linearized track of qualification, yet intensity suspends the ability of this expectation to operate as a perfect index. In any kind of thinking about image reception, we must theorize both halves of the event. "Approaches to the image in its relation to language are incomplete if they operate only on the semantic or semiotic level, however that level is defined. . . . What they lose, precisely, is the expression *event*—in favor of structure," he argues (26-27). In short,

Massumi concludes, "[m]uch could be gained by integrating the dimension of intensity into cultural theory. The stakes are the new" (27). In spite of everything that expectation, the symbolic, and structure allow for, they operate within a realm where nothing new emerges. But the event itself is not prefigured. As Massumi writes, "The expression-event is the system of the inexplicable: emergence, into and against regeneration (the reproduction of structure). Intensity is the unassimilable" (27). Following Massumi's lead, therefore, we can redescribe intensity of the event as *affect*.

The argument that culture is not exhausted in representation and explication—that it has “obtuse” or “third” meanings—speaks to culture’s inability to ever fully be a matter of recognition. Because representations are exchangeable in terms of signification, they are always consumable and recuperable in meaning. A practice, an object, a discourse sends out significations, which are received, and then consumed/read. Yet the kind of affectivity that Grossberg points to in rock music, or Barthes’ kind of useless buffoonery of obtuse meanings, is never recovered in recognition or interpretation. It resists consumption. Once again, we see that culture is a multi-level event, a double-order of implicit and explicit. A matter of intensity and qualification.

Here we begin to see a tension at work in culture between significations/representations and the erratic, obstinate, live operations of affect. Williams suggests that we must hold this tension open, resisting the urge subsume all of culture under the heading of signification. We cannot fully consume culture via representations, for the explicit social forms do not exhaust the range of culture. “[P]ractical consciousness is always more than a handling of fixed forms and units,” writes Williams. “There is a frequent tension between the received interpretations and practical experience. Where this tension can be made direct and explicit, or where some alternative interpretation is available, we are still within a dimension of relatively fixed forms”

(130). Interpretation as such cannot get to the “whole” of culture. As Barthes says, something takes place on the back of interpretation of cultural meanings. An accent remains in the in the folds of cultural meaning; an accent (like the Texas-Midwest accent that my own talk carries with it) cannot be reduced to the social contents that are explicable. This tension is perhaps not comfortable for those of us who wish to understand culture in its meaningfulness. “[T]he tension is as often an unease, a stress, a displacement, a latency: the moment of conscious comparison not yet come, often not even coming,” explains Williams (130). Indeed, we cannot deny the fact that *culture signifies*. But, at the same time, this is not all that culture does. Recalling Grossberg, we find that there are other effects besides meaning effects. Culture is not exhausted in its signifying meanings.

Without surrendering our social-constructivist or social-epistemic rhetoric models, therefore, we may wish to augment such theories with attention to affective registers of culture. As Massumi provocatively suggests, “Ideas about cultural or social construction have dead-ended because they have insisted on bracketing the *nature* of the process” (*Parables* 12; emphasis in original). Attuning to the palpability of unmediated sensations puts nature back into the stream of things. It (re)articulates the way in which “[t]he world is in a condition of constant qualitative growth” (*Parables* 12). Rather than “choosing” immediacy over mediation, we understand the ways they work together. There is an in-tandemness between the two orders of culture, between the sensation of the implicit and the meaning-fullness of the explicit. They feed into one another. Furthermore, this is why we can confidently say that the affective field (or structures of feeling) is more than just “personal reactions” or “personal emotions.” Rather, the sensation of the implicit has palpable effects in the mediated representations of the explicit order. Or, perhaps, we might say that the explicit order is never working apart

from a degree of implicit sensation. They are always feeding (back) into each other, much as “Hey Joe” is simultaneously a matter of explicit substances and implicit engagement.

TOWARD AN-OTHER VOCABULARY

At this point, we might want to ask ourselves why we would spend so much time talking about implicit, non-representative aspects of culture. I argue that reading two orders of culture—their different registers and their in-tandem feedback operation—is that it tells us something about the operation of culture and everyday life. Attending to both orders opens up some very *practical* ways of talking about culture as lived event. It also opens up possibilities for attuning to culture and “reading” the world. This attunement offers up an/other kind of rhetorical literacy—an affective literacy—that is not grounded in only the explicit order of representation, signification, and epistemology. Instead, an affective literacy would be a strange literacy, one that tunes into the lived dimensions of culture that do not surface or emerge in full representation. Attuning to culture’s affective field allows us to follow Lynn Worsham’s call to “expand our notions of literacy to their widest possible circumference, to a point where literacy . . . involve[s] us, and our students, in more than an epistemic relation to the world and to the earth” (“Writing” 101). If the world does not only emerge in recognizable ways, but also operates through implicit structures of feeling, then our literacy methods cannot continue to fall back upon modes of reading that only traffic on explicit articulation. We need a literacy that acknowledges, along with Maurice Blanchot, that I am not the center of what I know (10). That is, my ability to articulate and explicate the world cannot ever possibly cover its full operation.

Consequently, an affective literacy reads not only for the contents of culture, but also for its modes of in-action. This literacy is one that recognizes what Grossberg

argues: “The power of affect derives, not from its content, but from the fact that it is always the vector of people’s investment in reality” (*We Gotta Get Out* 104-105). Affect is a kind of event that makes culture go live; it is the being-walked, or inaction, of everyday life. As Worsham argues, even the work of ideology itself operates through structures of feeling. In “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion,” Worsham explores “the tight braid of affect and judgment, socially and historically constructed and bodily lived, through which the symbolic order takes hold of and binds the individual, in complex and contradictory ways, to the social order and its structure of meanings” (216). The realm of the social, with its various (ideological) formations and positions, is thus structured through this affective braid. Worsham argues that ideology’s power is not primarily in terms of its contents, but in the operation of relation itself. “[T]he primary work of ideology is more fundamental than the imposition of a dominant framework of meanings. Its work is to organize an emotional world. . .” (“Coming to Terms” 106).⁵ Likewise, Massumi argues that affect is “the connecting thread of experience. It is the invisible glue that holds the world together. In event” (217). Signifying and ideological contents of culture are only one order; those meanings must be put into play, much like a song must be played in order to make the musical contents “live.” Recalling Massumi’s terms, culture operates along the levels of qualification *and* intensity. The affective field of culture is important to read in its lived, practiced eventness—the ways in which culture is actively connected in experience.

But reading the modes of in-action cannot become simply another mode of explication. Williams warns against converting the process of culture into substances—a method that forgets the fact that social forms “are more than systematic exchanges between fixed units” (130). We cannot turn the process of culture into a content that is representable, recognizable, and sayable. To do so risks (once again) missing the lived

order of culture. Instead of reading for “hidden content,” we can attune to a kind of literacy that actively seeks out the strangely submergent cultural event. It is not a testable kind of literacy; neither is it a method of revelation. This literacy has a home base in the realm of the uncanny. It is more like a step further into the unsayable, insofar as it acknowledges the strangeness of the world without seeking to turn the event into fixed substances. Such a method follows Worsham’s call for a literacy that “would no longer function primarily as an agency in the articulation of knowledge . . . ; instead, it would become an indispensable agency for making the world strange and infinitely various” (“Writing” 102). It becomes a way of acknowledging that the world does not only function in explicit ways. Without forgetting to read culture for its significations and meaningful contents (as if we could forget such a thing), our literacies can stretch further to the rhythm, texture, accent, and intensities that cause culture to go live. As an/other method, then, an affective literacy attunes to the multi-leveled event of culture: the qualified level of content as well as the affective intensities that “connect” the world in a thread of experience.

In short, this affective literacy attunes to the strangeness of culture—its uncanny hauntings. Calling such attunement a “literacy” might seem strange, given that we are sure to expose more gaps than we close with its method. Yet this is precisely the point. Affective literacy tunes into what Avery Gordon calls *a ghostly matter*:

[I]n the world and between us as analysts and the worlds we encounter to translate into world-making words are hauntings, ghosts and gaps, seething absences and muted presences. The political and affective modalities by which we gain access to the facticity of constructed power either reckons with or displaces these ghostly matters . . . with consequences either way. (21)

The ghosts that “haunt” the world (and our analyses) are the strange, implicit, affective intensities that act as the connecting thread of experience. Yet, as Gordon points out, they are phantastic presences—muted and seething in their absence. Like a ghost,

they are present and palpable without being graspable. Culture has its own ghostly matters that operate in palpable, pre-emergent ways. Culture's ghostly matter "is not simply one of cognitive doubt," says Gordon, "or of the unknown, but something else" (31). It is, like any haunting, an experience that falls precisely in the crack between the explicit and the implicit orders, between the cognitive and the affective registers. Structures of feeling create the undercurrent for cultural operation, leaving strange traces in the wake of its event. According to Gordon's haunted social theory, culture is a matter of

the spellbinding material relations of exchange between the defined and the inarticulate, the seen and the visible, the known and the unknown. . . . A structure of feeling is precisely . . . the tangle of the subjective and the objective, experience and belief, feeling and thought, the immediate and the general, the personal and the social. (200)

Affective literacy attunes to this complicated tangle that I have been calling culture's double order. Rather than attempting to conceptualize and explicate all aspects of the tangle (fixing the exchange always in favor of the defined and known dimensions), Gordon suggests that our social theory might "reckon" with the ghosts. In Worsham's words, a ghostly reckoning is a mode of literacy that involves us in *more than an epistemic relation to the world*.

By way of illustration, I cite an example that hits close to home. Last year, I opened up my email to find my in-box flooded with messages from my neighborhood listserv. The messages were full of alarm about the fact that someone (or more than some *one*) was tagging the local streets of Cherrywood, our east Austin neighborhood. When tagging appeared on the local playground, it was met with angry posts from outraged community members. One listserv contributor took pictures of the playground equipment covered with black marked tags that simply said "toke." He then created a webpage

(which he circulated to the list) that accused the taggers of being gang members who posed a threat to the local children. (See Figures 1.1 and 1.2 below.)

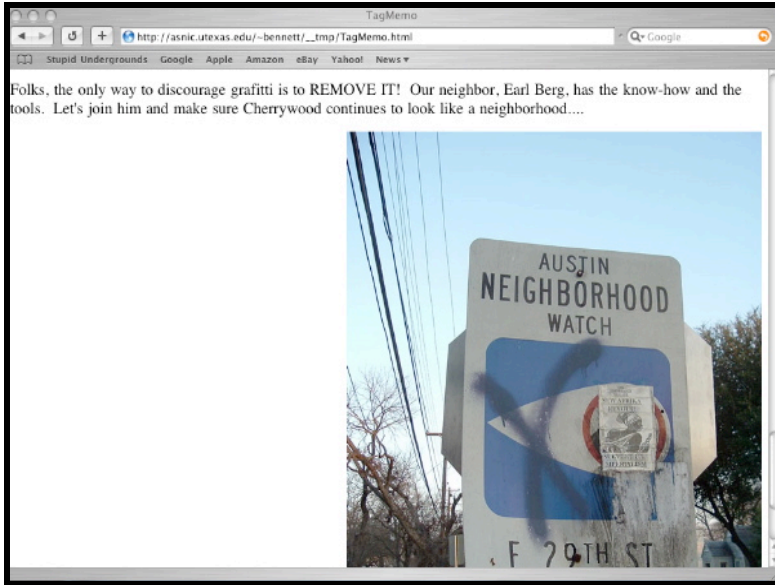


Figure 1.1: Screen shot of anti-graffiti webpage circulated to neighborhood listserv



Figure 1.2: "Courageous gang members launch daring raid on Patterson's playscape. 2- to 5-year-old defenders were no match for the spray-gun-wielding raiders."

My neighbor concluded his page with a call to arms against tagging: "Folks, the only way to discourage graffiti (sic) is to REMOVE IT! . . . [Let's] make sure Cherrywood continues to look like a neighborhood" (Bennet). Alarm bells ring. Exactly two blocks from my house, a man named Earl Burg has become notorious as Austin's most dedicated anti-graffiti crusader. Burg explains in an *Austin-American Statesman* interview that he has spent hundreds of hours and thousands of his own dollars to remove graffiti tags from our east Austin neighborhood. Yet he acknowledges that this is often a losing battle. Burg complains, "'They [taggers] just go and go like the Energizer rabbit, and they never get stopped. . . . Graffiti is ugly. Anybody with a brain knows it's ugly. It doesn't need to be on our buildings, on our houses, on our streets, on our light poles -- it just doesn't need to be there.'" (Osborne). Like many anti-graffiti crusaders, Burg fears writing's ability to bleed over into the circulation of a neighborhood, infecting its very lifeblood through such proliferation. Both Burg and my neighbor suggest that tagging has force enough to turn an entire neighborhood into *something else*—something no longer a neighborhood. The virus can spread.

This is nothing new or unique to Austin, of course. My neighbor's alarmed webpage falls into a rather familiar discourse that calls upon tropes common to civic conversations about tagging: criminality, urban decay, and threat. Thanks to media images that link criminality and youth, along with a huge proliferation of discourses about urban decay, my neighbor engages in the practice of (re)criminalizing graffiti. We can take my neighbor's discourse as the articulations of a dominant ideology—youth as criminals, property as bordered, racially-associated practices as threatening, etc. Similar anti-graffiti rhetorics make even more specific associations among writing, race, and crime. In one of the most popular online anti-graffiti resources, the "NoGraf Network,"

graffiti is explained as existing in two categories: “gang” and “hip-hop.” According to the NoGraf Network:

Most laymen immediately think of street gangs when they think of graffiti. But in terms of damage and number of incidents, this is a much smaller category than hip-hop. . . . Gang graffiti tends to be territorial (i.e., confined to "the Hood"), while Hip-Hop graffiti is regional. . . . By some estimates, gang graffiti only accounts for 10% of the national graffiti problem, whereas hip-hop accounts for 90%. (www.nograffiti.com)

By explicitly connecting tagging and graffiti to “hip-hop” culture, this anti-graffiti rhetoric draws upon ideological articulations of crime and race. Fears of graffiti therefore find a palpable “object” in the image of the racialized (and criminalized) youth. Such fear exists at the level of cognition and concepts. It is a matter of perceptions that are articulated in many different ways.

In civic discourse, tagging is often read through the hermeneutic of crime, dangerous youth, and threat. This fear itself spreads almost like a contagion. According to Joe Austin’s thorough history of New York’s early graffiti, “Before the names began to appear all over the walls of New York City in the late 1960s, there were already several frameworks in place within the commercial public sphere to ‘make sense’ of this new writing” (37). Images and stories of wild youth in the streets quickly became the means of articulating this new kind of urban writing. As Austin explains:

The fall of New York City, the narrative backdrop to so many other public chronicles after the mid-1960s, was frequently told through accounts about young ‘criminals’ and the decaying subway system (both separately and together), eventually intersecting in stories about delinquent youth on the trains. These stories set the terms by which writing would later be discussed in the commercial public sphere, and were circulating well before the writers took the trains. . . . (25)

Fears and low-level anxieties thus gave the public a literacy for reading graffiti through what Austin calls “framing stories,” which are articulated—almost “glued”—to a constellation of familiar, elements: crime, poverty, racial tensions, stories and memories

of violence, the changing cityscape, and so on. The earliest articulations and readings of graffiti, then, hung together through a kind of sensual glue. According to Austin, this sensual glue in late 1960s New York was the vague and shapeless fear of urban crisis and “the streets.” Problems relating to “‘the street’ were discussed and debated in the news and represented in fictional form in television programming and films. . . . Newspapers, television, and popular movies brought home a frightening view of city life framed as ‘crisis’ and ‘social decay,’” Austin writes (36-37). For New Yorkers, the subway was at the heart of such street decay, and when youth began to write in the subway, that writing became part of the constellation. Fear thus served as a type of glue that allowed images to attach to stories that attached to material conditions of the city.

The fear of racial others, youth, and disturbed property borders exists quite strongly in these discourses. However, we should also observe a different sense of *fear* at work. We find in these discourses a kind of general intensity, without a specific content or object: extreme tensions, high anxieties, and a kind of palpable intensity we call “being on edge.” My neighbor’s discourse is indeed “on edge,” which is a common state for many of us. To live in twenty-first century America is to be *on edge*. This is what Massumi calls “fear” as an organizing force in everyday life. “What society looks toward is no longer a return to the promised land but a general disaster that is already upon us,” he writes, “woven into the fabric of day-to-day life. The content of the disaster is unimportant” (“Everywhere”). Fear has become a kind of contentless pressure that has real effects upon culture. There is nothing to fear but fear itself: the pressure is always beyond reach, beyond target range.⁶ Massumi explains, “The enemy is not simply indefinite (masked, or at a hidden location. In the infinity of its here-and-to-come, it is elsewhere, *by nature*. It is humanly ungraspable” (“Everywhere”).⁷ This edgy, objectless

anxiety is of a different order than the object-based fears that register at the level of narrativized, cognitive representation.

Such “fear,” then, is not a qualified emotion. It is not fear *of* something. It is merely fear as a general, constant, imminent (and immanent) threat. The “general threat” do not identify “predicates expressing a property of the substantive to which they apply,” Massumi continues. “What they express is a mode. . . . *Fear is not fundamentally an emotion. It is the objectivity of the subjective under late capitalism*” (“Everywhere”). Fear ranges, but never lands once and for all. No representation is necessary, which is why this kind of fear is particularly productive as a cultural mode. Fear-without-object, an intensely registering affect that we might describe along the implicit order, proliferates to the degree that it is not qualified. It cannot be identified, talked away, killed off, or even represented fully. At most, it can be numbed through the drugs that are now being prescribed for the latest psychiatric diagnosis: *Generalized Anxiety Disorder*. According to Massumi, however, this is not just a personal diagnosis; it is a diagnosis of a cultural state. We live in *generalized anxiety*.

Yet this generalized anxiety exposes something important about everyday life. The generalized fear we live under—not articulated fears *of* something—acts as what Heidegger calls “a mode of attunement” to being-in-the-world. Heidegger explains that *fear as such* discloses the ways in which we are primarily situated and always within a practical consciousness: “It is not that we initially ascertain a future evil (*malum futurum*) and then are afraid of it. But neither does fearing first confirm something approaching us, but rather discovers it beforehand in its fearsomeness” (132). The fear that Massumi describes is a kind of engaged encounter with the strangeness of culture’s double orders; it is an encounter with what de Certeau calls “a certain strangeness that does not surface” in everyday life (93). This is why Heidegger maintains that fear as such comes from an

“uncanny” region (132): never able to be fully explicated through cognitive, conceptual knowledge, the uncanny and strange regions of culture are nonetheless attuned to through a kind of sensing. Anxiety (before it becomes the kind of anxiety *about* something specific) is a way that we tune into the complicated tensions that comprise culture. My neighbor’s fear certainly has an object—racialized youth and crime—but it also is put in(to)action by a brush with the uncanny, a strangeness that does not surface. My neighbors encounter the uncanniness of writing that *travels* and *spreads* like a viral infection.

This generalized anxiety is another way of identifying what Heidegger calls “Angst,” which is different than specific fears *about* something. According to Heidegger, “The threat does not have the character of a definite detrimentality which concerns what is threatened with a definite regard to a particular factual potentiality for being. What *Angst* is about is completely indefinite. . . . In *Angst* we do not encounter this or that thing which, as threatening, could be relevant” (174). Instead, Angst attunes to our situation of being-with in the world. “*That about which one has Angst is being-in-the-world as such,*” Heidegger tells us (174). In other words, as we have seen earlier, our position within doubly-ordered structures of feeling is thoroughly strange. Insofar as being is a matter of practical consciousness—a situation in which the event fails to emerge fully to the surface—we find ourselves in a strange position of less than full explication. We will not ever fully know the terrain in which we live and move. “In *Angst* one has an ‘uncanny’ feeling,” continues Heidegger. “. . . [U]ncanniness means at the same time not being-at-home. . . . *Angst* . . . fetches Da-sein back out of its entangled absorption in the ‘world.’ Everyday familiarity collapses” (176). Moreover, this “not being-at-home” is not a matter of imperfect knowledge or familiarity, but is rather a primary state of being. Given that

the world is always structured in feeling, an operation structured in an affective field that does not completely manifest in cognitive ways, Heidegger calls such uncanniness a “primordial phenomenon” (177).

My neighbor’s graffiti anxieties took up the uncanniness of tagging in the neighborhood and interpreted it as a problem. Insofar as graffiti changes the neighborhood into “something else,” he identifies precisely what Heidegger calls the collapse of “everyday familiarity.” Why was the reaction to a few marked tags so strong? Indeed, why would someone like Earl Burg spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours removing graffiti from his neighborhood? Perhaps one of the reasons is that such writing gives the sense of not being-at-home: it is a reminder that something strange also exists *within* those very structures (like a “neighborhood”) that we have come to conceptualize in full knowledge. We believe we know this neighborhood; we are at-home in our familiarity with it. And yet, the tagging and graffiti suddenly renders it a place that we do not *know*. What my neighbor surely fails to realize, though, is that our “neighborhoods” are always uncanny. Being structured in feeling, structured in the affective field of culture’s operation, means that we are always finding ourselves in the anxious situation of not being-at-home.

Another important point to draw from this discussion of fear, as well as our own identification of graffiti-fears, is that the non-representable *force* of fear itself is not a “content” or a “substance,” but rather an affective operation that generates effects. If we break away from “fear” as a sense of a qualified emotion, therefore, we see that both Heidegger and Massumi point to *affect* as a mode of cultural production—a textured experience that gives shape to what we identify in terms of “social content.” This

texturing process exposes an affective operation that is non-cognitive, sensual, and emergent; it a process that is never fully articulated or explicitly narrativized outside of the substantive effects that it produces. Thus, the larger point is not that fearful emotions structure culture, but rather that culture is structured and “glued” together in affective ways. What we might take away from my neighbor’s alarmed webpage, then, is something that *creates the possibility for* the articulated objects of fear (crime, wild youth, neighborhood decay, etc.). We must be careful not to conflate or confuse the identifiable, re/presentable contents of culture with their production, which does not take place (only) in the realm of representation and explication. Neither does the affective dimension take place *in response* to those representations. The affective field allows the cultural substances—the content of culture—to emerge into a kind of structure of relations. In other words, the affective field is primary.

While anti-graffiti rhetorics operate quite strongly in the explicit order—articulating ideologies and signifying meanings—we can also observe a “practiced” dimension at work. The free-floating anxiety has palpable effects on the explicit and discursive aspects of this rhetoric. Or, to put it another way: these rhetorics are still *lived* and *in-process*, even while they send off signifying meaning in discourse. Thus, we find a feed/forward/back loop at work here in these rhetorics. Sensual and palpable intensities feed into representations (without being conflated with them), while representations and meanings generate and augment or diminish certain shared intensities. Rather than reading the anti-graffiti rhetorics as *primarily* an instance of ideological, interested, racialized meanings, therefore, we find that they are *primarily* an instance of an affective structuring of world. They indicate a way of experiencing the lived, practiced dimension

of culture. An affective literacy must reckon with this tangle of cultural rhetorics—a tangle that blurs the distinctions between public and private, personal and social, implicit and explicit, cognition and affect. It is a tangle of intensities that cannot ever be fully captured in a representational form, yet its effects are palpable. The scene here is real, as are its effects, even though the cultural elements are haunted by an implicit order of registered intensities and sensations. Without landing on a final resting point of articulation and explication (as my neighbors have done, for example, in naming the local taggers as criminals and gang members), we might attempt to uncover the world in its strangeness—its doubled operation. Rather than trying to read my neighbor’s discourse in its own signifying representations, therefore, an affective literacy would attempt to “expose” the intensities that move through his discourse, giving it strength and duration. This is a literacy that does not seek to know more, but rather seeks to expose the limits of our own knowledge. It exposes the faulty horizons of our own imaginary totalities.

IMPLICATIONS

What do these two orders of culture have to do with those of us in rhetoric and composition? More pointedly, what does an affective dimension of culture mean for those of us who teach writing and rhetorical theory? Without overstating the claim, I would argue that the affective field of culture effects what we take as the *telos* of our pedagogical work. On one level, our critical impulses within composition and rhetorical pedagogies are problematized if Worsham is correct in her assertion that “our affective lives are largely immune to the legislative efforts of social critique and to the legislative gains of progressive social movements” (“Going Postal” 216). For those of us in rhetoric and composition, the *implicit* order of affect raises some interesting questions about the

effect(iveness) of analysis. If there is an implicit order of culture that does not fully emerge in discourse or representation, can we address culture's operation in a full or significant way? What would an expanded rhetorical vocabulary of affect allow us to say and do about culture that we might not otherwise be able to say and do?

In addition to this implication for pedagogy, we also see an interesting question of rhetorical production developing from this discussion of the affective field. If rhetoric itself is comprised of two orders—the explicit and the implicit—then we are led to conclude that rhetorical production will not merely be a matter of meaning-full productions. Rhetoric will also be a matter of the sensually lived, in-process, and non-cognitive intensity that registers in the implicit order. Rhetoric is haunted by tangled structures of feeling.

Notes

¹ Aden Evans suggests that the "implicit" and "explicit" orders are not opposites, but rather two forces in tension. Evans explains that music itself is charged with a certain degree of explication, as well as a certain amount of material or substance that remains less than fully explicated. At the extreme, a critical analysis of a song's lyrics might be the pinnacle of such explication. Music, that is, can and must be plugged into certain parameters of meaning. It involves our understanding. However, we must also acknowledge the importance that the *implicit* forces play. When listening to a song, for example, we are actually hearing a collection of individual sounds, waves, signals, etc. According to Evans, "To hear a bunch of chords instead of isolated notes, to hear a progression instead of a bunch of chords, is to hear the implicated" (181). In other words, a song is not taken as the individual notes that technically and explicitly comprise it, but as something that is left unexplicated.

² See Sharon Crowley's *Methodical Memory* for an extended argument about the history of current-traditional rhetoric and its equation of "clear writing" with "clear thinking."

³ See James Berlin and Michael Vivion's collection, *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom* for careful discussion of the relationship between composition and cultural studies.

⁴ A great amount of scholarship has recently examined the social construction of emotions. See especially Lutz and Abu-Lughod's *Language and the Politics of Emotion* and Boler's *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*.

⁵ Though Worsham herself often uses "emotion" to describe this affective field, she is careful to explain that this is not the sense of emotion that is normally found on (the losing side of) the emotion/reason binary. Neither should we identify this sense with of emotion that is often yoked "to an expressivist theory of the subject and an unreconstructed notion of 'the personal'" ("Coming to Terms" 105). Rather, Worsham identifies subjectivity (and the personal) as a product that is mapped through affective processes ("Coming to Terms" 105).

⁶ Michael Moore's documentary *Bowling for Columbine* tracks the ways that this contentless, free-floating fear has manifested in culture. Or see Glassner's *Culture of Fear* and Mike Davis' *Ecology of Fear*.

⁷ I almost cannot help but to think of the Homeland Security warnings here. The system seems to be built from palpable fears that lack a specific object. Red means intensify fears. Yellow means release much fearful intensity. Details about why we fear, however, are rarely ever given.

Chapter Two: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetoric's Ecology

[P]laces. . . are best thought of not so much as enduring sites but as *moments of encounter*, not so much as 'presents', fixed in space and time, but as variable events; twists and fluxes of interrelation. Even when the intent is to hold places still and motionless, caught in a cat's cradle of networks that are out to quell unpredictability, success is rare, and then only for a while. Grand porticos and columns framing imperial triumphs become theme parks. Areas of wealth and influence become slums.

--Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift

PREFACE

If we were to create a map of what elements actually comprise my neighborhood's anti-graffiti rhetoric in the previous chapter, we would find that it is not located in any coherent totality. Rather, this public rhetoric is an amalgamation of many different kinds of events, discourses, materialities, and feelings. The rhetoric consists of the angry emails themselves, the surrounding discourses of crime that were evoked and invoked in those emails, the carefully framed images created of my neighbor's website, and the substantive though intangible feelings of anxiety permeating the messages. In addition to these elements, moreover, the rhetoric circulating through my neighborhood cannot easily be dissociated from the acts of tagging found in our local park (not to mention the specter of graffiti that have covered the walls of many cities for the past thirty years), as well as decades' worth of anti-graffiti discourses that have spread thanks to outspoken local figures, civic campaigns, and internet sites like NoGraffiti.org. Still other surrounding elements might include media images of youth and crime, or racialized connections with graffiti.

What this "map" tells us, in other words, is that a given public rhetoric is a loose connection of diverse elements, actions, and feelings. Playing slightly on the words of

cultural geographers Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, which I include in the epigraph above, rhetorics are best thought of as variable events and fluxes of interrelation. However, when speaking about public rhetorics, it becomes somewhat easy to slip into the language of totality. Indeed, we often speak about “a” rhetoric or “the” rhetoric of something, as if the rhetorics being discussed are packaged into a coherent whole. (Hence we have “The Rhetoric of Science,” “The Rhetoric of Motherhood,” “The Rhetoric of Christian Fundamentalism,” to take a few examples from panel titles at a recent rhetoric conference.) Yet, as reflected in “the” rhetoric of anti-graffiti in my neighborhood, the elements of public rhetorical ecologies are distributed across a wide range of phenomena and experiences.

Public rhetorics are thus *trans-situational*: comprised of encounters and embodied experiences that exist in loose proximity. At this point, however, the familiar concept of “rhetorical situation” poses an interesting problem. When thinking about *a* rhetorical situation, what becomes of these amalgamations and interrelating fluxes? What exactly are the limits of rhetorical situations if we understand rhetorics as nothing *but* interrelations among situations, encounters, and discourses? In the following chapter, I want to argue for a revised understanding of rhetoric’s situations in the social field. Rather than conceptualizing rhetorical situations as singular substances, I make a case for rethinking rhetoric as distributed in an ongoing amalgamation of variable events. I argue that while we cannot or should not do away with the concepts of rhetorical situation, we might productively emphasize its function as a kind of shorthand for the kinds of interrelating fluxes we see above. But before we travel much further into the flux, let us return to the opening scenes of rhetoric’s situation.

THE ELEMENTS OF RHETORICAL SITUATION

Lloyd Bitzer's 1968 article "The Rhetorical Situation" was groundbreaking in its effort to provide a model of rhetoric's operation in the world by theorizing the contextual dimensions of rhetoric. The Bitzerian concept of rhetorical situation also provided scholars with a vocabulary after which to model their own heuristic and pedagogical practices. In the words of Craig Smith and Scott Lybarger, "Immediately following its publication, 'The Rhetorical Situation' was absorbed into the consciousness of rhetorical theorists and critics" ("Bitzer's" 199). His theory helped to recenter rhetoric as a humanistic concern, departing from its modernist degradation as ornamentation, trickery, or mere style. As Bitzer himself explains, "When I ask, What is a rhetorical situation?, I want to know the nature of those contexts in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse. . ." ("Rhetorical" 382). This starting point places the question of rhetoric—and the defining characteristic of *rhetoricalness*—squarely within the scene of the situational context. Bitzer goes on to suggest that while "[a] tree does not obtain its character-as-tree from the soil, . . . rhetorical discourse, I shall argue, does obtain its character-as-rhetorical from the situation which generates it" ("Rhetorical" 384). In this way, Bitzer's inquiry about the *rhetorical situation* is a means of delimiting the scope of rhetoric to a specific kind of function: rhetoric is *responsive*: "[R]hetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to a situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution to a problem. . ." ("Rhetorical" 385-386). With this definition, he manages to define rhetoric as an activity grounded in what he calls "pragmatics," or what we might also call "everyday life."

Consequently, the heart of Bitzer's rhetorical situation is both a particular set of circumstances and an appropriate response to those circumstances. In his explicit definition of the rhetorical situation, Bitzer places greatest stress on the invitation and

performance of rhetorical utterances: It is “a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterances; this invited utterance participates naturally in the situation, . . . and by means of its participation with situation obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character” (“Rhetorical” 385). Because the situation is the condition of possibility for *rhetorical* discourse, therefore, the exigence is quite important. As Bitzer explains, “Any *exigence* is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (“Rhetorical” 386). In order for an exigence to be a rhetorical exigence (which will then invite and create the conditions for rhetorical discourse), it must be an imperfection that can be solved through deliberation and discourse. The exigence is one that must invite rhetorical discourse.

As we might imagine, such a definition locates the exigence in the external conditions of material and social circumstances. Bitzer tells us that exigencies are “located in reality, are objective and publicly observable historic facts in the world we experience, are therefore available for scrutiny by an observer or critic who *attends to them*” (“Rhetorical” 390; emphasis mine). The rhetor is one who *attends* to the exigence that “really” exists. In Bitzer’s schema, rhetoricians come to the call of a problem’s invitation for solution through discourse, which is then rendered as rhetorical discourse. Of course, this means that the rhetorician may incorrectly respond to the call of an exigence by responding in an unfitting way. “If it makes sense to say that situation invites a ‘fitting’ response,” writes Bitzer, “then situation must somehow prescribe the response which fits. . . . [But] the rhetor may or may not read the prescriptions accurately” (“Rhetorical” 390). Indeed, the rhetorician might even overlook the exigence, missing the “invitation” for a fitting response. Because the exigence is located “in reality,” however, a situation is not rhetorical if it is contrived “from fantasy” or from “the imaginary

objects of a mind at play” (“Rhetorical” 390). Bitzer posits rhetorical situations within a specific temporality: first comes the material condition of defect, followed by the rhetorical discourse in response. In his schema, rhetoric is *rhetorical* by virtue of its nature as a response.

Twelve years after Bitzer first introduced the rhetorical situation, he clarified and extended this concept in “Functional Communication: A Situational Perspective.” Here Bitzer explains that humans are marked by their functional interaction with both physical and mental environments. “Our habits and patterns are keyed to natural pulsings of days and seasons,” writes Bitzer, “and our daily work involves our hands, bodies, and thoughts with objects and relations presented by the world” (“Functional” 22). Within this functional interaction of human and environment, however, we come to notice things that no longer work in the ways they should. As Bitzer put it, “From among the mass of details comprising the total environment something is recognized as other than it should be, that is, an exigence; and something else is recognized as a means of remedy or modification” (“Functional” 23). In this functional operation and its breakdown, therefore, we have the structure of a rhetorical situation. We attempt to relate to both physical and mental environments, but we tend to repeatedly encounter “a defect, an obstacle, something to be corrected” (“Functional” 26). In short, something in the environment ceases to work well, posing both a problem and an opening for its remedy.

In this perspective, the rhetorical exigence is comprised largely of what Bitzer calls “a factual condition plus a relation to some interest” (“Functional” 28). The problem of defect is “anything physical or mental” whose existence “is independent of one’s personal subjectivity” (“Functional” 28). The role of the rhetorician is to discover this factual condition and its possible remedy. According to Bitzer, the factual condition of defect must be capable of modification if it is to be considered a *rhetorical* exigence. At

the same time, because rhetorical exigencies are factual conditions apart from subjectivities, he also maintains that not all exigencies require human recognition in order to exist as an exigence. For example, writes Bitzer, “[i]f drinking water contains a very high level of mercury, then surely an exigence exists even though no one is aware of the factual condition and exigence” (“Functional” 31). An exigence is not born through its apprehension, but is already *part* of the environment in which we function.

Bitzer’s theories are important for rhetorical scholarship insofar as they provide a model of rhetoric’s operation “in the world.” He theorizes the multiple dimensions of rhetoric as a relative and contextual scenario. This is a significant explanation that serves to recenter rhetorical theory as a humanistic concern, as opposed to its modernist degradation as ornamentation, trickery, or mere style. Bitzer contributed a flexible system for reading rhetoric “in the field” of study, legitimating rhetorical scholarship within the range of other social sciences like anthropology and sociology.

However, since the introduction of Bitzer’s theories, a number of challenges and modifications have been directed at the concept of “rhetorical situation.” For example, in “The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation, a careful critique of Bitzer’s essay, Richard Vatz challenges the notion that exigencies *exist* in any autonomous sense. Whereas Bitzer suggests that the rhetor *discovers* exigencies that already exist, Vatz argues that exigencies are *created* through the rhetor’s work. “The world is not a plot of discrete events,” writes Vatz. “The world is a scene of inexhaustible events, which all compete to impinge on what Kenneth Burke calls our ‘sliver of reality.’ Bitzer argues that the nature of the context determines the rhetoric. But one never runs out of context” (156). Even in those scenes that we might easily come to “see” as rhetorical situations, Vatz’s critique argues that this “seeing” is an instance of specific selection and interpretation. For example, he asks, “What was the ‘situation’ during the Vietnam conflict? What was the

situation of the 1972 elections? What is any historical situation?” (156). Problems that are widely acknowledged as exigencies are not discrete, but are rather a process of framing; there is no stasis in the ongoing movement of the world.

This is not to say that exigencies are not constructed, or that they do not exist. Vatz argues that the problems that form a “rhetorical situation” are called into being by their rhetorician-creators. Instead of thinking of the rhetor as a discoverer of problems, he imagines rhetors as evocative storytellers. This critique addresses what Smith and Lybarger call Bitzer’s “bias against the social construction of reality” (“Bitzer’s” 201). By choosing a particular set of events (and erasing others), the rhetorical strategist invents a problem-scene that calls for response. The rhetor is one who literally evokes the situation into being. As Vatz says, “[M]eaning is not discovered in situations, but *created* by rhetors. As soon as one communicates an event of situation he is using evocative language” (157). For Vatz, this point is important in its implications for rhetorical ethics. As matter of evocation and not discovery, rhetorical exigence places a burden upon the rhetorician to account for her selection, deflection, and framing of a given situation. According to Vatz:

If one accepts Bitzer’s position that ‘the presence of rhetorical discourse obviously indicates the presence of a rhetorical situation,’ then we ascribe little responsibility to the rhetor with respect to what he has chosen to give salience. On the other hand if we view the communication of an event as a choice, interpretation and translation, the rhetor’s responsibility is of supreme concern. . . . They are *decisions* to make salient or not to make salient. (158)

In this view, the “discovery” of a rhetorical situation is much more like a setting of terms and conditions for discussing the problems. To turn a phrase from Kenneth Burke, Vatz’s notion of the rhetorical situation is a *terministic screening*.

Likewise, Scott Consigny also offers a critique of Bitzer’s concept of autonomous exigence. His 1974 article “Rhetoric and its Situations” addresses similar concerns that

Vatz discusses, though Consigny also takes issue with what he sees as an underemphasis on constraints within Vatz's position. Contrary to Bitzer, Consigny argues that "the rhetor does not face the relatively clear-cut task of answering a question or solving a well-posed problem in a determinate context. Rather he finds himself 'thrown' into an indeterminate existential situations, in which he must make the best of the 'facticities' he encounters" (177). Those situations that appear to be "well-posed" problems are actually what we might see as moments of "frozen inquiry," according to Consigny (177). Such places are somewhat partial stopping points within the world's ongoing eventness. However, he adds, the rhetorician is not free to merely invent any rhetorical situation at all. She still bumps up against the stubborn material details of the world. Consigny stresses the importance of working within these stubborn details in order to achieve a relevance that can mark a situation as "rhetorical":

The rhetor must work through what Aristotle calls the *pragmata* of the situation in such a way that an issue emerges from his interactions with the situation; and the rhetor who fails to take these constraints into account, spinning issues from his imagination, may never get in touch with events or his audience, and may rightly be dismissed as ineffective or irrelevant. (179)

While it is arguable that Consigny unfairly accuses Vatz of imagining that the "rhetor is a completely free agent" (175) who can imagine any rhetorical situation she desires, both scholars identify a fundamental problem with Bitzer's understanding of exigence. There are no exigencies existing in nature apart from the rhetor's selection and interaction with them.

In yet another critique of Bitzer, Smith and Lybarger argue that the notion of exigence needs to be de-centered as a singly focused and dominating form of rhetorical "control." Instead, they suggest that a rhetorical situation involves a plurality of exigencies and complex relations between the audience and a rhetorician's interest. In

this way, they revise Bitzer's relatively autonomous notion of exigence by making it more interactive with other parts of the situation:

This perspective eliminates the word "controlling" from Bitzer's notion of exigence unless a compelling case for a dominant exigence can be made both logically and subjectively. It calls for linking the exigence to some other part of model. For example, what was the controlling exigence for the speaker . . . [or] a given segment of the audience? (205).

Echoing the critiques of Vatz and Consigny, Smith and Lybarger offer yet another challenge to the concept of exigence as existing "out there" in reality, waiting to be discovered or noticed by the perceptive rhetorician. For Smith and Lybarger, the exigence is more like a complex of various audience/speaker perceptions and institutional or material constraints. They emphasize the important role that perception plays, since "each auditor will have a perception of the rhetor *and* the message in addition to a perception of the issues, [which means that] rhetorical communication is always in a state of flux that requires the critic to move beyond the strict realism of Bitzer" (200). Indeed, because "exigencies are everywhere shot through with perceptions" (197), there can be no pure exigence that does not involve various mixes of felt interests. Smith and Lybarger offer this reconception as a way of retaining Bitzer's model without falling into the trap of determinism.

SITUATION AND SITUS

Although these debates variously address significant issues in the context of rhetorical situations, we may find it fruitful to temporarily bracket the question of whether Bitzer, Vatz, Consigny (or other critics) correctly describe the relations of rhetoric. Instead, we might begin by interrogating the premises from which nearly all of these theories begin. That is, what are the consequences of adopting a model of rhetoric

that is built primarily *from* the context of *elemental relations*? Barbara Biesecker’s article “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of Difference” offers one critique of these takes on exigence and rhetorical situation. As Biesecker writes, the problem with many takes on rhetorical situation is that the theories conceptualize rhetoric as an action that occurs within a scene of already-formed, already-discrete individuals. For Biesecker, this problem is especially evident in rhetorical concepts of “audience,” which often treats this element as a rather unproblematic and obvious site. The problem, she writes, is that:

if we posit the audience of any rhetorical event as no more than a conglomeration of subjects whose identity is fixed prior to the rhetorical event itself, then . . . the power of rhetoric is circumscribed: it has the potency to influence an audience, to realign their allegiances, but not to form new identities. (“Rethinking”)

In other words, rhetoric becomes a matter of *influence* within a relatively set field of elements—including audience, exigence, and speaker. The rhetorical situation turns into a matter of fairly discrete bodies that have been “moved” to a different spot (or, in the case of rhetorical failure, have failed to “move”) along a spectrum. Arguably, both Bitzer and Vatz undertake rhetorics of influence insofar as their argument turns only on the question of *where* the rhetorical nature of a situation arises: whether it is in the situation itself or the speakers. What is not in question, however, is what the *rhetorical situation* brings into being—what it brings about in the interaction of the elements as a process. That is, rhetoric is not the “stuff” that moves fixed elements from one position to another. Rather, it also highlights a process that is going on.

Biesecker’s critique brings us to an important point about situation that can be uncovered in an exploration of the etymological tropes that surround the concept. Consider the following: tracking the Latin roots of “situation” brings us to the key words *situare* and *situs*, both of which resonate with our definitions for location, site, and place.

The Latin word *situs* is closely tied to the originary position of objects. Significantly, this term still has currency in legal vocabulary as reference to the places in which a crime or accident occurs, or the location of property. By definition, *situs* implies a bordered, fixed space-location. The concept of “rhetorical situation” is appropriately named insofar as the models of Bitzer, Vatz, Consigny, and others describe the scene of rhetorical action as “located” around the exigence that generates a response. In spite of their differences, the various models above share the common feature of “rhetorical situation” as being describable in totality through the articulation of (1) problem or exigence, (2) audience(s), (3) constraints of expectations and audiences, (4) textual features of the response, (5) the rhetorical response (“solution”) to the exigence. Although none of the above models explicitly state this claim, we might extrapolate the *situs* of rhetorical situation as being built upon the exigence itself. Or, to put the same statement less abstractly: rhetorical situations are built upon a certain problem. The *nature* of the exigence will determine what kind of *situs*—what kind of rhetorical situation—develops or should develop.

Biesecker points out the ways in which the models of rhetorical situation take certain (isolated) elements as *primary*, which then sets the scene for conceptualizing the rhetorics that follow. Critics like Bitzer and Vatz “take as their founding presumptions a causal relation between the constituent elements comprising the event as a whole. Either speaker or situation is posited as logically and temporally prior, one or the other is taken as origin,” she explains (“Rethinking”). In other words, models of rhetorical situation have been posited as beginning in a fixed *situs*, whether that site happens to be an external situation in “the real world” or the evocative creation of the rhetorician. Citing Derrida’s notion of *differance*, however, Biesecker points out the ways in which these “sites” do not completely hold. For instance, if we look to Derrida’s text *Glas*, we find an

example of a text that plays out its “meanings” not in one fixed column of text but in the creases and folds between the various columns. Different typographical styles, different discourses (on Hegel and Genet), different demands of the reader—all of these cause the “user” of *Glas* to endlessly engage with irreducible differences that refuse to be assimilated together into a neat totality. These irreducible tissues of difference form what Derrida evokes as *differance*. As Biesecker writes:

[W]e might go so far as to suggest that the blithe proposition in *Glas* is: everything deliberately and unavoidably happens in its crease, in its fold. . . . *Differance* is deliberately performed as the fold, where the border between inside and outside (Hegel and Genet) . . . becomes undecidable as the text slips erratically from one column to the other. (“Rethinking”)

The “sites” of meaning—from column to column, from inside to outside—no longer hold, in other words. It is impossible to keep the sites separated within the larger field of *differance*. With this field of difference in mind, Biesecker explains that one trouble with the models of Bitzer and Vatz is that they suggest perspectives are comprised of (fixed) elements or sites. The rhetorical situation (in the models of Bitzer and Vatz) thus plays out its meaning through these elements. Here we arrive at an un(der)explored line of inquiry into one of rhetoric’s most familiar and most revered theoretical-pedagogical paradigms. Biesecker’s critique points to the way in which various models of rhetorical situation tend to describe rhetoric as a totality of discrete elements: audience, rhetor, exigence, constraints, and text. In other words, despite their differences, these various takes on rhetorical situation to be rooted in the views of rhetorics as *elemental*.

To cite one example of such “elementalism,” we might consider Smith and Lybarger’s analysis of the rhetorical situation surrounding two 1989 speeches from President George Bush concerning the “war on drugs.” The authors use a modified version of Bitzer’s model in order to identify three main elements of Bush’s speeches: exigences, audiences, and constraints. In their discussion of the exigences involved in this

particular situation, Smith and Lybarger argue that, at the time of these speeches, polls reported that the public felt drug abuse was a serious problem. Media reports “helped increase the interest in the problem by providing direct knowledge of it. Bush took advantage of an attitude that the press reinforced” (203). Accordingly, this public concern constrained Bush’s choices of which public exigences to address in his official attention. At the same time, of course, Bush’s articulation of “the drug crisis” helped to reinforce this exigence *as* a rhetorical problem that must be addressed. This focus on shared perception of exigence is important for the rhetorical critic, they write, insofar as it helps her to consider the situation’s articulation:

The critic can assess . . . the rhetorical situation using multiple perspectives: 1) how the speaker dealt with an exigence perceived by an audience in order to achieve some congruence with the audience, 2) how the speaker created an exigence for an audience, 3) how the speaker’s purpose was derived from an exigence different from that of the audience, and so forth. In any case, perception of some exigence is necessarily prior to persuasive intent. (204-205)

Smith and Lybarger emphasize the mutuality of exigence from the position of rhetorician and audience, reflecting how both elements help to create the sense of problem. This is a careful modification of Bitzer’s model in that the authors link the articulation of exigence(s) to multiple agents and constraints. Yet, they also unequivocally state that it is the *perception* of exigences (on the parts rhetorician and audiences) that must be identified on the part of the rhetorical critic, for this is the heart of the rhetorical situation. Though a rhetorical critic may find herself speaking of multi-exigences, her analysis of the situation begins in this/these place(s).

Next, Smith and Lybarger look to the element of “audiences,” which are again construed as multiple. The rhetorical situation of Bush’s speeches cannot be considered apart from several audiences that were involved in the situation. Because there were multiple and mutually shaping exigences, say Smith and Lybarger, there are the multiple

audiences that Bush the rhetorician was called upon to address. Not only did Bush have to address the taxpayer-voters who were concerned about deteriorating neighborhoods, but he also was called upon to address legislatures, people who knew drug addicts, and school children who were faced with the temptations of drugs. As Smith and Lybarger argue, these multiple audiences helped to constrain the sense of exigence, which in turned constrained Bush (who wanted to be re-elected) and his choice of public policy focus. Certain constraints also prevented Bush from successfully addressing the exigence for certain audiences, however. Not surprisingly, Bush's rhetorical style prevented him from relating to his "younger audiences from poorer neighborhoods" (208). The fact that these speeches were televised, allowing people to "tune out" whenever they wished, added another layer of constraint to the rhetorical effectiveness of the speech itself. Finally, the perception of personal agency also prevented certain audiences from feeling as if they could act in such a way to respond to the exigence—even when they shared the President's articulation of the problem and solutions.

Smith and Lybarger's reading offers a very helpful model of the rhetorical situation, one that productively complicates more simplistic aspects of Bitzer's early model. By presenting the notion of exigence as a mutually shaping (and mutually constraining) construction by multiple audiences and rhetorician, we get a reading of the rhetorical situation as socially constructed and multiple. Nevertheless, we might notice how this reading still adopts a site-model as its methodological framework. That is to say, even with the consideration of multiple audiences and constraints, the "situation" is still constructed as a *site*, where various elements come together in a kind of rhetorical container. A visual representation of Smith and Lybarger's rhetorical situation, for instance, might yield something along the following lines:

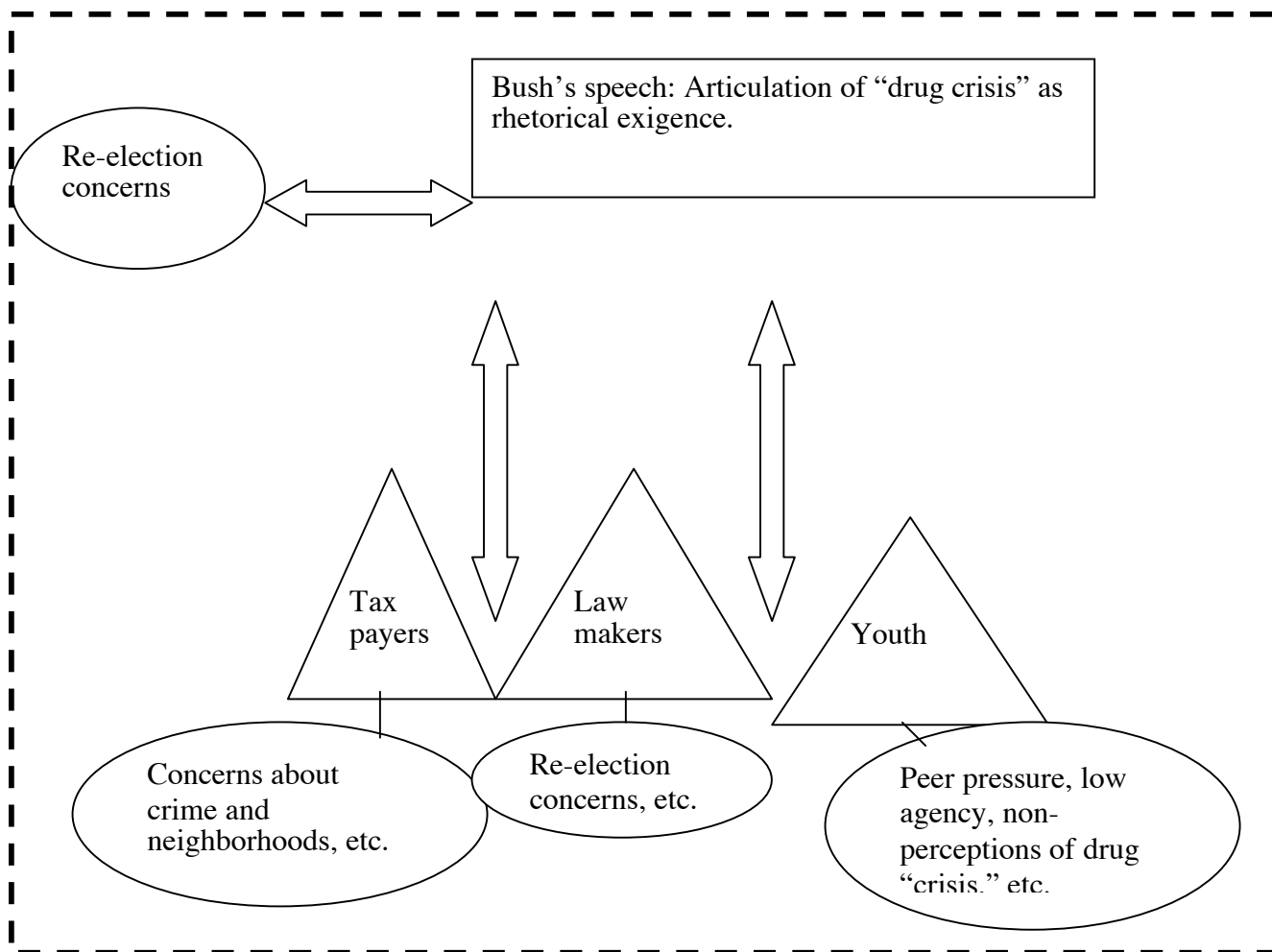


Fig. 2.1. Visual representation of Smith and Lybarger's analysis of the rhetorical situation of Bush's anti-drug speeches.

This representation has the benefit of showing both the useful complexity of a model of rhetorical situation, as well as its limitations. One of the useful complexities lies in this model's reflection of the interactions among audiences' constraints, the rhetorician's constraints, and (articulation of) the exigence. This model of the rhetorical situation is not overly-determined by one factor, but in the mutually constraining relation of all the elements.

At the same time, however, the model is quite limited in its ability to show the full complexity of the events surrounding this “situation.” As we can see above in this model, the exigence is not properly located in any of the elements—or in the model as a whole. When Smith and Lybarger talk about the exigences involved in the “war on drugs,” for example, they talk about audience perceptions, Bush’s speeches, and the various constraints of all participants. We might conclude from this that the exigence proper does not exist per se, but is instead an amalgamation of processes and encounters: concerns about safe neighborhoods, media images, encounters of everyday life in certain places, concerns about re-election, articulations of problems and the circulation of those articulations, and so forth. What we dub *exigence* is more like a shorthand way of describing a series of events.

The site-based models of rhetorical situation echo more recent desires to find those fixed places that exist outside of the “placeless” wanderings of postmodernism. But, as Steven Shaviro points out in his science-fictionalized theory *Connected*, we live in a networked space of flows and connections, not fixed sites. “The predominant form of human interaction . . . is *networking*,” he writes (2003 131). This sense of “networked life” is not a matter of the information bits traveling across the network, however, but rather the actual, historically-shaped forces of flows themselves. As Shaviro explains:

[T]he network is not a disembodied information pattern nor a system of frictionless pathways over which any message whatsoever can be neutrally conveyed. Rather, the force of all messages, as they accrete over time, determines the very shape of the network. The meaning of a message cannot be isolated from its mode of propagation, from the way it harasses me, attacks me, or parasitically invades me. (2003 24)

Temporarily bracketing the rather ominous perspective that Shaviro brings to this sense of connection, we find that networks involve a different kind of habitation in the social field. To say that we are connected is another way of saying that we are never outside the

networked interconnection of forces, energies, rhetorics, moods, and experiences. In other words, our practical consciousness is never outside the prior and ongoing structures of feeling that shape the social field.

At the same time, life-as-network also means that the social field is not comprised of discrete *sites* but from events that are shifting, moving, and singular in their momentness. The social field is comprised of events that are grafted onto and connected with other events. According to Shaviro, “The space [of networks] can be exhilarating, disorienting, or oppressive, but in any case it is quite different from the space of places” (2003 131). Our sense of place tends to remain rooted in an imaginary that describes communities as a collection of discrete elements, like houses, families, yards, streets, and neighborhoods. Nevertheless, Shaviro explains that place should be characterized less in terms of this sense of community (discrete elements taken together), and more in the interactions *between* those elements—their encounters in the crease and folds:

What’s crucial about the space of places is rather something other than “community”: the fact that, in large urban agglomerations, networking is less important than . . . *contact*: the serendipitous encounters between strangers. . . . These sorts of encounters happen in the pedestrian-friendly spaces of older large cities. . . . The space of places is less that of nostalgically idealized traditional communities than that of turbulent urban modernity. (2003 132-133)

In this way, place becomes decoupled from the notion of *situs*, or fixed (series of) locations, and linked instead to the in-between en/action of events and encounters. Place becomes a space of contact, which are always changing and never discrete. The contact between two people on a busy city street is never simply a matter of those two bodies; rather, the two bodies carry with them the traces of effects from whole fields of culture and social histories. This is what it means to say that the social field is networked, connected, rather than a matter of place, sites, and home.

Furthermore, the notion of place has recently become much more complicated in the theoretical frameworks of both cultural geographers and rhetoricians. In *Geographies of Writing*, for example, Nedra Reynolds argues that it is important “to understand geographies as embodied, and how the process of social construction of space occurs at the level of the body, not just at the level of the city or street or nation” (143). What we normally take as “sites,” therefore, are not only comprised in a *situs* or fixed location. Reynolds explains that these “sites” are made up of affective encounters, experiences, and moods that cohere around material spaces. This is why sites are not just seen, but (perhaps even more so) they are felt (147). When questioned about their city, for example, students with whom Reynolds worked had no trouble at all identifying the “bad” and “good” parts of town. Although these “good/bad” sites may even have fairly solid boundary markers (as they do in Austin, for example, where the “bad part” of Austin is commonly said to begin east of I-35), we might argue that these sites are not only comprised *as such* through their location or collection of elements. Instead, they obtain their descriptions as good/bad sites from the affective and embodied experiences that circulate: feelings of fear or comfort, for instance.

Even in those spaces that are more obvious examples of bordered sites, we find it increasingly difficult to speak in terms of fixed place. Take the example of cities, which cultural geographers Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift thoroughly rework in *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. According to Amin and Thrift:

[C]ontemporary cities are certainly not systems with their own internal coherence. The city’s boundaries have become far too permeable and stretched, both geographically and socially, for it to be theorized as a whole. The city has no completeness, no centre, no fixed parts. Instead, *it is an amalgam of often disjointed processes and social heterogeneity, a place of near and far connections, a concatenation of rhythms* (8; emphasis mine)

The city itself is less a *situs*, say Amin and Thrift, than a certain way of processing. In fact, it may be more appropriate to rethink “city” less as a noun (implying a *situs*) and more of a verb, as in *to city*. We *do city*, rather than exist *in the city*. Amin and Thrift argue that cities are more about movements and processes than the elements that materially construct their borders. They explain, “We certainly take circulation to be a central characteristic of the city. . . . [C]ities exist as a means of movement, as means to engineer *encounters* through collection, transport, and collation. They produce, thereby, a complex pattern of traces, a threadwork of intensities. . . .” (81). Amin and Thrift thus move away from the site-model framework of urban spaces, which renders the city as a kind of “container” for the unique elements that the city envelops.

Amin and Thrift argue that cities are more about movements and processes than their elements that materially construct the borders and circuits. They explain, “We certainly take circulation to be a central characteristic of the city. . . . [C]ities exist as a means of movement, as means to engineer *encounters* through collection, transport, and collation. They produce, thereby, a complex pattern of traces, a threadwork of intensities. . . .” (81). Amin and Thrift thus move away from the site-model framework of urban spaces, which renders the city as a kind of “container” for the unique elements that *this* city envelops. The site-model would imagine, for example, that Austin is a container for the local elements within a given space, much as New York is a container for another set of local elements. Talking about those two different cities merely involves talking about the different elements held by the same (kind of) container called “city.” Yet Amin and Thrift suggest that the city-as-container does not adequately describe the city as an *amalgam of processes*, or as a circulation of encounters and actions. Rather than relying upon the container metaphor, therefore, they offer up an ecological metaphor in order to read the city:

[I]t is only by moving beyond the slower times of the city's built fabric—which seem to form a container—to *the constant to and fro of the movements which sustain that fabric* that we can begin to understand what a city is. . . . The city becomes a kind of weather system, a rapidly varying distribution of intensities. (83; emphasis mine)

Though cities are indeed *sites* (or can even be described in terms of borders, boundaries, and containers), Amin and Thrift suggest that these *sites* (the *situs*) is sustained by the amalgam of processes, which they describe in ecological terms of varying intensities of encounters and interactions—much like a weather system.

FROM SITUS TO DISTRIBUTION

What does this discussion of cities and sites have to do with the rhetorical situation? For one thing, we find in the early models of rhetorical situation is a certain kind of belief in rhetoric as *taking place* within a *situs* rather than within the swirling in-between of encounter. Recall, for example, that Bitzer explains the rhetorical situation as “a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterances; this invited utterance participates naturally in the situation, . . . and by means of its participation with situation obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character” (“Rhetorical” 385). This description implies that the “natural context” is one that can be examined in a discrete matter. As long as the various elements are identified—the relevant persons, events, objects, exigence, and utterance—then we can articulate the situation in its totality. Bitzer leads us to believe that the rhetorical situation is one in which we can visit, so to speak, through a mapping of these elements. Likewise, in Vatz's version of the rhetorical situation, we find similar *situs*-hope through the identification of the rhetorician's evocation of exigence and the audience discourses that follow. Even in Consigny and Smith and Lybarger's altered models, the stress upon *constraints* still leaves us with the sense that the rhetorical situation is indeed a site that obtains its

character from its location in particular sets of discrete elements (like audience, particular circumstances, and discourses). In spite of the differences among these various models, then, they all present rhetorical situation as a collection of elements that come together in a fixed site.

Biesecker suggests that we might move away from a model of rhetorical situation that draws meaning from the fixed elements and more toward a model that sees meaning in terms of an *articulation*—a coming together of the tissues of irreducible difference. She explains, “[I]f rhetorical events are analyzed from within the thematic of *differance*, it becomes possible to read discursive practices neither as rhetorics directed to preconstituted and known audiences nor as rhetorics ‘in search of’ objectively identifiable but yet undiscovered audiences” (“Rethinking”). Instead of focusing on the *situs* of rhetorical situation, therefore, Biesecker encourages us to begin thinking of rhetorics in wider terms of an affective field. We can begin to “read the rhetorical situation *as an event* structured not by a logic of influence but by a logic of articulation. . . . [T]he rhetorical event may be seen as an incident that produces and reproduces the identities of subjects and constructs and reconstructs linkages between them” (“Rethinking”; emphasis mine). Rhetorical situation as *event* turns our attention to the swirl of forces and elements and happenings that go into an articulated moment.

But if a place-based perspective has overly troubled models of rhetorical situation, then we might turn our attention to augmenting this framework by borrowing from the ecological models that affective cultural theorists (such as Shaviro, Reynolds, and Amin and Thrift) have developed alongside site-specific models of social processes. In *The Wealth of Reality: An Ecology of Composition*, for example, Margaret Syverson performs such an alternative by arguing that writing is a radically *distributed* act, rather than an isolated act of creation among individual elements. Syverson writes:

[T]he knowledge involved in “writing” . . . depends on activities and communications shared in interactions not only among people but also interactions between people and various structures in the environment, from physical landmarks to technological instruments to graphical representations. . . . Our theories of composition have been somewhat atomistic, focusing on individual writers, individual texts, isolated acts, processes, or artifacts. (8)

Syverson continues to argue that rhetoric and composition “has posited a triangle of writer, text, and audience,” which “has tended to single out the writer, the text, or the audience as the focus of analysis” (23). The problem with such a conception is that this isolated view fails to highlight what Syverson calls the emergent ecological process of writing. Rather than focusing on the familiar “triangle” that places the various elements into a static relation with the other elements, Syverson argues that “we can speak of the distribution of . . . [text composing] across physical, social, psychological, spatial, and temporal dimensions. . . . [T]he social dimensions of composition are distributed, embodied, emergent, and enactive” (23). The difference in Syverson’s ecological approach is that it places the “scene” of writing into a field that is much more distributed and socially situated. Yet this is also precisely what removes much of the stability and stasis from the model of writing. Syverson argues that writing is more about the distribution of matters like physical interactions (with the writer’s nested environments—desk, room, city, campus, streets, noise) and social interactions (the embodied relations between writer and culture, habits of relation and interaction, nearness and distance from symbolic locations of power).

Syverson thus points to the ways that writing is more than a matter of discrete elements (audience, a writer, text, tools, ideas) in static relation to one another (a writer types her ideas into a computer for an audience who reads the text). Rather, writing is distributed across a range of processes and encounters: the event of using a keyboard, the encounter of writing body within a space of dis/comfort, the events of writing in an

apathetic/energetic/distant/close/etc. group. The importance of discussing “distribution” lies in the ways that it points us to how those elements are enacted and lived, how they are put into use, and what change comes from the in-processes-ness itself.¹

Just as Syverson argues that writing must be decoupled from an elemental framework, I argue that the most familiar rhetorical situation models also tend towards atomistic frameworks. Much like Syverson has called for in composition studies, we can attune to a model that is more “distributed” across a wider social field. Such attunement is important if we want to account for rhetoric’s operation in the social field; that is, if we are to explore how rhetoric circulates in culture, we need a model that allows us to discuss such movement. When we recall that Raymond Williams’ tells us culture operates in a “practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity” (132), the notion of discrete segments of a “situation” seems almost to overlook the fact of dwelling-in-the-world or an interrelating continuity. Rather than imagining the rhetorical situation in a relatively closed system, therefore, this distributed or ecological focus might begins to imagine the situation within an open network. Returning to Amin and Thrift’s notion of a city as a weather system, or an agglomeration of processes, we might recall how we saw that “city” might better be conceptualized in terms of a verb—as in *to city*—as opposed to a noun. In much the same way, we might argue that the rhetorical situation is better conceptualized as a mixture of processes, rather than a fixed noun or *situs*. We might even imagine ourselves speaking in terms of rhetorical situation as a process or event: we *do* rhetorical situation, rather than finding ourselves *in* a rhetorical situation. Leaving aside the grammatical awkwardness of such a conception for just a moment, this kind of foregrounding within an affective field offers a vocabulary that reveals a wider context for “rhetorical situation.”

Returning to Amin and Thrift's notion of a city as a weather system, or an agglomeration of processes, we might recall how we saw that "city" might better be conceptualized in terms of a verb—as in *to city*—as opposed to a noun. In much the same way, we might argue that the rhetorical situation is better conceptualized as a mixture of processes, rather than a fixed noun or *situs*. We might imagine ourselves speaking of the process of rhetorical situation (as in *to rhetorical situation*) as opposed to *a rhetorical situation*. We *do* rhetorical situation, rather than finding ourselves *in* a rhetorical situation. Leaving aside the grammatical awkwardness of such a conception for just a moment, we find that this kind of foregrounding within an affective field offers a further kind of contextualization—one that points to the "rhetorical situation" as wider than previously conceived. We can place that evoked "situation" within a wider field of affective operation. The evocation of an exigence risks becoming (or, rather, *remaining*) a rather faulty concept if we do not place it within a wider context of feeling-structures.

As the model of the rhetorical situation of Bush's speeches reflects, the entire "situation" is a mixture of events and processes: social encounters of various kinds, moods and feelings, articulations, encounters of media images, circulations, and experiences and personal/social traces of those experiences. What we take as "a" rhetorical situation is merely an event linked to other events linked to other events and so forth. The rhetorical situation simply is not comprised of those elements, then, as much as the linkages among them. To stretch yet another analogy, consider the example of the world wide web (WWW) and our reluctance to think about it as a fixed site. The www is made up of individual elements (really called "sites"), but those individual webpages are dynamic, changing things. But, more importantly, the WWW itself is also heavily made up of its *links* between those "sites." The WWW is in the interplay between different

sites; it *is* the networking that is happening. In much the same way, rhetorical situations are not in their elements but in the networking.

To borrow another conceptual metaphor, we are speaking about rhetorical processes that operate within a viral economy. Much like a virus, the intensity, force, and circulatory range of a rhetoric are always expanding through the mutations and new exposures attached to that given rhetoric. Consider Smith and Lybarger's example of Bush's "war on drugs" rhetoric. Presumably, this rhetoric did not effectively persuade certain parts of his audience—namely the youth who experiment with drugs. Nevertheless, while this failure may be obvious, Bush's rhetoric (ironically) did and still does enjoy a wide circulation in the social field. The war on drugs may have been a joke to many of these youth (one need only cite those who mock "Just say no" rhetoric by wearing t-shirts with anti-drug slogans in an ironic manner²), yet these youth are nevertheless affected (and *infected*) with Bush's rhetoric. They enter into the rhetoric's wide ecology through such actions. Even their mockery creates a sustained and intense engagement, which creates and adds different intensities and force to the "weather system;" the *shape* and *direction* of the rhetoric is changed through these very mixtures. We find that the "war on drugs" rhetoric emerged across various sectors around the same time in the 1980s and 1990s, with certain bodies helping to extend the circulation and force. This emergence not only included bodies and encounters that vocally took up Bush's calls, but also those (seemingly oppositional) bodies who extended the half-life of the rhetoric through simultaneous mockery and attention that circulate, mutate, and attach new viral traces to the field of the rhetoric's distribution.

SITUATIONS UNBOUND: CITY PROBLEMS

In order to explore this shifted emphasis on rhetorical ecologies—rather than the elemental models of rhetorical situation—I would like to take a local example from my adopted Texas hometown, Austin. When I first moved to Austin in 1992, the economy was less than ideal. While Austin is a place of state government affairs and bureaucracy, the city economy was far from being competitive with larger Texas cities like Dallas or Houston. Few graduates from the University of Texas remained in Austin for the jobs; you stayed because you loved Austin.³ But this all changed in the mid-1990s, when the technology boom brought new infrastructure into the city. Thanks to an onslaught of dot com startup companies in the area, as well as bigger companies like Dell Computers, Austin quickly became a major player in the technology sector. The city earned the nickname “Silicon Hills,” which echoed its close connection with the technologically saturated areas known as “Silicon Valley” and “Silicon Alley.” Almost overnight, Austin became a major player in the financial and technological sector.

As a result of this growth, Austin experienced significant changes to its entire economy. Not only did the city’s population explode, but real estate prices and median income also began to climb. According to a 2002 city council whitepaper on Austin economic development:

Local economic growth in Austin has been extraordinary in recent years. A combination of corporate relocations and expansions, rapid population growth, extensive investment in technology and Internet-related start-ups, and the meteoric rise of Dell helped make Austin among the five fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States over the last decade. Since 1990, per capita personal income has risen from \$18,092 to \$32,039 (during 2000), more than 280,000 jobs have been created, and the average price of a home sold has grown from \$87,600 to a current estimate of \$199,500, a gain of almost 130 percent. (“Austin’s Economic Future”)

Because of the growth in income levels and a more professional population, many large chain stores began to view Austin as a viable market for retail outlets like Home Depot, Barnes and Nobel, Starbucks, Target, Borders, and other “big box” franchises. Locally owned businesses in Austin quickly began to feel the sting of increased rents in those areas that had previously been affordable. Higher costs of operation forced many smaller local businesses to either move outside of their long-established sites in central Austin or close down business completely. Sound Exchange, a popular local record store in the heart of central Austin (commonly referred to as “the Drag”), is one example of a business that was forced to shut down its operation due to higher rent. Whereas Sound Exchange’s rent had previously been \$2800 throughout the 1990s, the new lease in 2003 climbed to \$4369 per month (Gross). After serving as one of the most unique record stores in Austin since 1977, Sound Exchange finally closed its doors in January 2003. The business was quickly replaced by Baja Fresh Mexican Grill, a national fast food chain.

The experience of Sound Exchange is hardly unique in Austin. As journalist Lacey Tauber wrote in a 2002 story for the Austin Independent Media Center about local businesses along the Drag:

On the south end, Captain Quackenbush's (aka Quack's) coffee house moved out more than two years ago to Hyde Park. The smell of incense no longer wafts down the street from the A-frame of Good Gawd, what used to be a filled-to-overflowing vintage and costume shop, now relocated to South Lamar. Banzai Japanese and sushi restaurant and its smiling Buddha mural are nowhere to be found. In their place sits the new home of Diesel clothing company, a branch of a major corporation that can set shoppers back more than \$130 for a pair of jeans. . . . Continuing up the Drag, more corporate faces appear. A long-vacant area is now home to Chipotle Mexican Grill, a business that is partially owned by the McDonalds corporation. Where the old Texas Textbooks once stood, Tyler's shoe and beach shop . . . displays a giant Nike logo. (“Is Austin Slowly Losing its Character?”)

By the time I began teaching first-year writing at The University of Texas in 2001, the Drag's main businesses consisted of The Gap, Chipotle Mexican Grill, Diesel, Urban Outfitters, Barnes and Nobel, and Tower Records. The face of the Drag looked quite different from my own earliest experiences of central Austin's small local businesses. In less than a decade, the Drag lost several independent bookstores, music stores, coffee shops, and small restaurants. It was difficult not to sense the palpable transformation that was moving throughout the city.

In fact, many Austinites became quite vocal in their displeasure surrounding these changes. *Austin Chronicle* journalists Chris Walters and Jim Shahin articulated this unhappiness in a lament about Austin's transformation:

Austin was a place for misfits and dreamers and rebels, a work in progress toward some endearingly flawed bohemian utopia or, as the late Doug Sahm would have it, Groover's Paradise. It was smug, self-righteous, and never as progressive as it pretended -- Where's the mass transit? Where's the minority mayor? -- but it was also free-spirited, socially tolerant, and culturally exciting. It was different, and it was special. And it was special because it was weird. (Politics)

For many locals, Austin's transformation equated into a sense of homogenization. The *weirdness* of local businesses was seen as being lost in the onslaught of big box stores that carried the same products as a similar store in another city or state. It became more difficult for local artist(ian)s, writers, or musicians to speak directly to the store owner about carrying their products. Even the larger and more established local businesses found it difficult to compete with big box stores that began to open in direct proximity to their sites.

In 2002, local businesses began to take more aggressive measures to fight this trend. Two businesses in particular, BookPeople Bookstore and Waterloo Records, changed the shape of the city's rhetorics after they borrowed a phrase from a sticker that had been appearing sporadically around Austin: "Keep Austin Weird."⁴ As BookPeople

owner Steve Bercu explains, after the city agreed to give incentives for a large Border's Bookstore to open up directly across from BookPeople and Waterloo, the owners of both stores decided to take a stand:

Sometime in October 2002, I was talking with the owner of Waterloo Records about our struggle to stop the City of Austin from providing incentives for a developer who planned to put a chain bookstore across the street from our stores. I suggested that we get some bumper stickers that said "Keep Austin Weird," put both our logos on them, and then give them away at our stores. I thought it would be fun and that it would capture a little of the spirit of Austin, its interest in staying unique, its independent streak, its slightly quirky feel. We decided that we should buy 5,000 stickers and see what our customers thought. (Bercu)

The 5,000 stickers that BookPeople and Waterloo were so popular that the stores immediately ordered another 10,000 and then 25,000 stickers. Almost a year later nearly 60,000 stickers had been distributed. There were enough "weird" stickers for every one in fifteen Austinites. While BookPeople and Waterloo (and their supporters) successfully and aggressively used the campaign to block the construction of Borders, the sticker and phrase continued to circulate as a synecdochal cry against the onslaught of the corporate homogenization of Austin. As Bercu writes:

Keeping Austin Weird is great fun and great for Austin, but it is not something that is unique to Austin. It is Austin's answer to the national problem of sameness that communities are suffering and reacting against. Everyone wants to live somewhere that has some uniqueness and does not feel like every other place in the country. What's new is that people are finally realizing that the proliferation of chain stores is not anything to be happy about, and that they must take action if they are to maintain any character in their cities. (Bercu)

Soon enough, other Austin businesses joined the call to weirdness. Local businesses—everything from Amy's Ice Cream to Shady Grove restaurant—began to sell t-shirts that featured their individual logos on front and the same "Keep Austin Weird" logo on the back.



Fig. 2.2. The popular "Keep Austin Weird" sticker.



Fig. 2.3. "Keep Austin Weird" t-shirt.

The phrase “Keep Austin Weird” quickly passed into the city’s cultural circulation, taking on the importance of a quasi-civic duty. One pledge pitch for a local public radio station told listeners, “You too can work towards keeping Austin weird by pledging to keep KOOP Radio 91.7FM on-the-air. . . .” In certain parts of Austin, it is nearly impossible to go for very long without finding some display of the slogan on t-shirt, a car’s bumper sticker, a tote bag, a mug, or a local business’s billboard vowing to “keep it weird.” Ironically enough, the injunction to “Keep Austin Weird” has even erupted at the level of city politics. In a 2002 white paper on Austin’s economic

development, the city council formally acknowledged the reality of “weird Austin” and its effect on the life of the city itself:

[Q]uality of life, an umbrella term that loosely covers variables such as recreational and cultural amenities, overall cost of living, diversity of local residents, and a sense of place . . . is an increasingly important asset. This is especially the case in Austin, where there is a strong sense that the above factors combine in a unique and special way. (“Austin’s Economic Future”)

The white paper footnotes that this “strong sense” is “[e]ncapsulated in the popular bumper sticker ‘Keep Austin Weird’” (“Austin’s Economic Future”). With this public incorporation of the slogan, the city council legitimated the rather intangible weirdness as a very real element of Austin’s everyday existence. One news story phrases Austin's attempts to address they city's economic downtown like this: "[T]he most Austin-like of Austin's efforts . . . is what is dubbed the 'Keep Austin Weird' task force. . . . [I]t's an example of how Austin sees its quirkiness not as a sidenote, but as a key part of its plans for growth and for drawing and keeping people" (Fan). The weirdness of Austin is a sense that works its way into the cultural mood of the city itself.⁵

Using a model of rhetorical situation to analyze Austin’s “weird rhetoric”, we might describe the “big box” influx as (in the eyes of many Austinites) an exigence, or an imperfection marked by urgency. Many Austinites feared that stores like Border’s would displace locally-owned and independent business because of increased rents and unfair competition. Certain rhetorical bodies involved in this scene, like BookPeople and Waterloo Records, chose to make the exigence salient by evoking it specifically as a problem. There were also a number of institutional constraints upon anti-big boxers, including a reluctance to be seen as undermining free and fair competition. For Austin residents, too, the exigence brought about by the city’s changes could be read in terms of Bitzer’s model. Just as small businesses started finding it impossible to survive in the “new” Austin, many residents began to complain about the disappearance of affordable

housing inside city limits. Additionally, a larger population meant increased traffic, less pedestrian and bike-friendly roads, and an explosion of new housing areas. It is also possible to read this scene in terms of exigence and rhetorical response from many different kinds of rhetors—local business owners, residents, and Austin lovers. The urgency is marked by what was seen as an erosion of local flavor, uniqueness, and a particular characteristic that once marked Austin as unlike any other city. These groups responded to the rhetorical urgency by making a call to various audiences to stop this erosion. Yet these audiences are constrained by perceived needs for economic development, lack of historical context regarding “the old Austin,” and a lower level of investment in “keeping” Austin as anything (since much of the population is comprised of university students who will not live in Austin after school is finished).

Like any theoretical model, the models of the rhetorical situation help us to take the shapeless muddles involved in a social “scene” and put them into a category. But, while this model can certainly help us to see the scene’s various elements, there is one important aspect that troubles its neat conclusion. We should take care to observe the ways that the standard models of rhetorical situation tend to parallel a scenario drawn from oratory, which focuses upon the speaking rhetor and a listening audience. Indeed, this oratorical scenario is the scenario in which the model works best.⁶ In our present example, we find the “call” to fight big box businesses appears to go out to a (listening) audience who will hopefully “act” upon this call (by supporting local businesses, not shopping at chain stores, and vocalizing their disapproval of city incentives for non-local chains). Though Bitzer and his critics do not set up their models as such, the echoes of oratorical call-and-response resonate throughout the concept of rhetorical situation.

In the instance of “weird” rhetoric in Austin, we find the “call” to fight big box businesses appears to go out to a (listening) audience who will hopefully act upon this

call (by supporting local businesses, not shopping at chain stores, and vocalizing their disapproval of city incentives for non-local chains). However, we can generally agree that rhetoric's operations do not always follow an oratorical scenario. Even political stump speeches are not truly designed *as* oratory, but as more as events that turn into a strange currency called "sound bites." These sound bites are fragments that enter into a cultural circulation that move in and among a situation in which persuasion is under way. In the scene of a presidential election, for example, it would be fruitless (and ultimately impossible) to try to squeeze all aspects of the rhetorical scene into categorical elements of "audience" or "rhetorician" or even the "rhetorical text" generated by the rhetorician(s). When I placed a Kerry/Edwards bumper sticker on my car earlier this year, was I acting as rhetorician or audience in the rhetorical situation of the election's exigence? Arguably, I was neither. Rather, I engaged in an event, trying to add to the mass of pro-Kerry signs and stickers already in my neighborhood, which was meant to create a sense of Kerry-density that will reach the local drivers, walkers, and visitors. I entered an ecology through action and doing. Thus, while we might speak in terms of audience and rhetor, we find that the call-to-weirdness is taken up and extended mostly in actions that are not easily categorizable in the discrete elements of (neo)Bitzerian models.

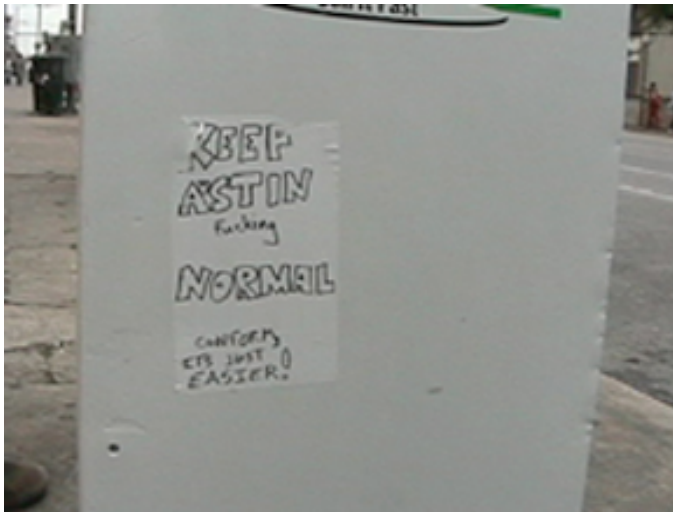
Consequently, the elemental models of rhetorical situation may not be able to fully account for the distribution and processes through which rhetoric circulates. Because the rhetoric of "weirdness" is distributed through ecologies that expand beyond audience/rhetor/exigence, we begin to see more about its operation in the world by bracketing these terms for a moment. For example, consider the ways in which this rhetoric has circulated in the social field. The original "weird" rhetoric has been expanded in the course of new calls, which adopt the phrase and transform it to fit other purposes. (Such as the UT Liberal Arts' design "Keep Austin Liberal Arts" or the Austin

Public Library's "Keep Austin Reading.") Similarly, new businesses (often quite generic and bland) that emerged as *replacements* of older local businesses have begun to adopt the "Keep Austin Weird" slogan as advertisement. Even more surprising is a full page advertisement for Cingular Wireless phone service, which prominently features the phrase: "Keepin' Austin Weird" beside their corporate logo. The obvious irony in Cingular's use of this phrase relates to the "weird" slogan's origination in a movement against big business and non-local corporate interests in Austin. In other words, choosing Cingular cannot "keep Austin weird" in the sense that this original rhetoric was meant. Even older businesses have started using the phrase as a way of prompting themselves in local publications. These various rhetorics overlap through a kind of *shared contagion*, though the calls for local business support, the promotion of Liberal Arts, and the encouragement of literacy are hardly overlapping in terms of their *exigencies* or even their *audiences*. Yet, at the same time, playing off the original "Keep Austin Weird" slogan gives the "weird rhetoric" an expanded half-life and increased circulation through a kind of affective transmission.



Fig. 2.4. Variation upon a weird theme.

In fact, even the increasingly popular “weird” counter-slogans manage to illustrate a kind of distributed ecological spread of this rhetoric. Appearing on t-shirts and bumper stickers throughout Austin, for example, there is the “Make Austin Normal” campaign, which was the brainchild of a University of Texas business student who wanted to make a point of what he sees as the ironic popularity of the “Keep Austin Weird” slogan. But the “Make Austin Normal” campaign is hardly unique. While walking along the one of the main city streets of central Austin in the spring of 2004, I found a piece of white paper pasted on the side of a newspaper stand featuring the handwritten words: “Keep Austin fucking normal. Conform. It’s just easier.” (See Fig. 2.5.) Upon seeing a picture of the homemade “Keep Austin fucking normal” sign, my friend laughingly commented, “Doesn’t this person realize just how *weird* this sign is?” While my friend meant this comment in jest, it addresses yet another aspect of what we might call “rhetorical ecologies.” Not only do counter-rhetorics directly respond to and resist the original exigence, they also expand the lived experience of the original rhetorics by *adding* to them—even while changing and expanding their shape. Just as the anti-“Just say no” rhetorics ironically helped to extend the range of Reagan and Bush’s rhetoric



against drug use (though not in the ways that Reagan or Bush intended), the anti-weird rhetorics of Austin add to the “weird rhetoric” ecology through a practice of mixture and encounter.

Fig. 2.5. Counter-Sign

To put it another way, (neo)Bitzerian models cannot account for the amalgamations and transformations—the *viral spread*—of a given rhetoric within its wider ecology. When we bracket the discrete elements of rhetor, audience, and exigence in the “Keep Austin Weird” movement, we attune to the *processes* that both comprise and extend the rhetorics. Indeed, the rhetorical process itself plays out between the sites of these elements: the call is currently circulating on shirts and cars, it is mocked and pushed against, and it is distributed across purposes and institutional spaces. It circulates in a wide ecology of rhetorics. As Lawrence Grossberg argues in *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*:

The identity and effects of any event are produced, not merely by the appropriations and interventions of people, but by active historical practices and structures, tendential forces and struggles, relations of domination and subordination. . . . No one can guarantee the multiple and unforeseeable consequences of actions; events can always be reinflected, detoured, rerouted and even hijacked by other forces and practices. (115-116)

In the case of this particular public rhetoric, the various reinflection of the "weird" rhetoric are distributed through what Grossberg describes as the detoured, rerouted, and hijacked forces that also circulate through the cityscape.

In addition to this distribution, furthermore, the rhetoric itself (or, more precisely, the articulation of the “exigence”) entered into ecologies that were already distributed across various bodies. The fight against big box stores and franchise chains emerged in the midst of a number of *cultural moods*. For some local Austin residents, the city itself was marked by the experience of a certain kind of intensity. Perhaps one invocation of this experience is found in Richard Linklater’s cult classic film *Slacker*, which follows a number of unnamed characters and their unrelated narratives around the streets, small stores, and public sites in Austin. Rather than telling the story of any particular character, *Slacker* actually tells the story of Austin and its “slacker” culture of drifting,

underachieving college-aged oddballs. The camera follows various people around the streets of central Austin, up and down the main streets, into local bookstores and coffee shops, through parks, and into small diners. The characters, for the most part, are constantly walking the streets of Austin at a slower than slow pace. Like a “slacker culture” itself, the movements are plodding, sometimes aimless, and never rushed. For Austinites, *Slacker* became the mark of the city’s spirit. As the city began to grow, however, Austin lost many of the very landmarks memorialized in *Slacker*, replaced by chain stores, franchises, or nothing at all. *Slacker* thus became a mark of something lost—an almost personalized “individual” who was gone, but not forgotten. As *Austin Chronicle* writer Mark Savlov writes:

Much of what you see in *Slacker* today is long gone, but like a good friend since passed, the memories of the fundamental locales linger in the minds of those who were present at this magical, formative time. And, of course, depressed, aging slackers such as myself can always pop in the *Slacker* tape, crack a cold Shiner Bock, and return to the old school. (“Slacker”)

Unlike the (perceived) fast-paced, freeway culture of Dallas, Houston, or other local Texas cities, Austin was seen as a place where you could drift. Perceptions of Austin often imagined the city as a walking culture, a community of familiar faces. It was, in a word, small scale—a feeling materialized in the drifting imagery of *Slacker*.

Indeed, even before the technology boom of the 1990s, the city’s cultural *feel* had long been made opaque through stories people told *about* Austin. Whereas Dallas and Houston were seen as ultra-conservative and dull, Austin had seen itself as more progressive and unique. Austin was commonly described as an oasis within Texas. With the changing population of the 1990s, however, some Austinites began to complain about the “immigrants” from Dallas and Houston. The complaints reverberated with fears of colonization from the bland image of fast-paced, corporate-minded Dallas. As journalist Mike Perry laments, “I lived [in Austin] and went to school back in the ‘70s (yep, that’s

my dirty little secret) and I'm not sure there ever was a better town or city. Now? Well, there's still a lot to keep you interested over there on the Colorado, but to my mind it's turning into Dallas" ("We're Just Like Austin"). There is something quite serious in the narratives of Austin-as-oasis. Stories of "old Austin" tell of the city as a refuge, a safe house; it was the place of Texas misfits. Austin resident Don Clinchy extols old Austin like this:

Austin is to Texas as San Francisco is to, well, Oklahoma. It is a nation-state of progressive politics and culture surrounded by 700,000 square miles of provincial, backwtery fear and loathing. It is . . . raucous bars in 19th-century storefronts and cafes in old houses and vintage clothing stores in pleasantly shabby 1950s strip malls. It is . . . no worries at Eeyore's Birthday Party at Pease Park on the last Saturday in April, where strong drink is not discouraged and young women go topless and controlled substances go uncontrolled. It is Willie Nelson and Jerry Jeff Walker and memories of when they played at the long-gone Armadillo World Headquarters. . . . More than anything, Austin is the vague and pleasant notion that everything will be all right. ("On Earth" 387)

Echoing Clinchy's words, many other narratives of living in Austin take on a kind of cultural salvation narrative. Compared to what Clinchy calls the "provincial" spirit of other Texas cities, Austin is often held up as a space of liberalism, progressivism, tolerance, and (in some versions) even hedonism. James Tynes, another Austin resident, tells a story of his first visit to Austin in 1975, when he was serving in the Army. After being told about the vibrant music scene in Austin, Tynes decided to make a trip to see the city for himself:

Most of the bars on the coast were off limits to soldiers because of the "bad vibes, man." Austin was different. No one seemed to care where I came from or what I was doing before I walked into the bar. The music was what was important. No one asked me to leave because my hair was too short. The people and the music seemed to say: "If you like this, then maybe you belong here." ("I See" 363)

Perhaps it is less crucial for us to determine the validity of these stories—whether or not they are "true" reflections of Austin's civic spaces—than to notice the fact that they

circulate throughout the city's spaces. They help to create the moods that merge, mix, and mutate upon exposure with other bodies.

Thus, in the rhetorical scene of "Keep Austin Weird," we must acknowledge the *interrelating continuity* (to borrow Williams' term for the operation of culture within a "practical consciousness") that was already in operation before the "situation" came into being. That is, a particular affective ecology was already in process long before the articulation of an exigence. There was an operation of what we might call a networked *mood-ecology*. Drawing from the previous chapter's feedback/feedforward continuum of affect and articulation (in his terms, "immediacy" and "cultural mediations"), we remember that constructed social articulations resonate with sensations and affective intensities that move within any body. To put it a bit differently, if we describe a rhetorical exigence as a series of "events," then we find ourselves in the position of recognizing the bi-level nature of the event: qualification and intensity. One is not, properly speaking, "prior" to the other; rather, they interact in a kind of mutuality.

Therefore, rather than recognizing the articulated and evoked exigence (the problem of overdevelopment in Austin) as *first*, followed by a degree of investment from the various audiences, we can instead acknowledge the affective ecology of intensities that were already in operation—and continued to operate and mutually shape the exigence after its evocation. What we might miss in speaking in terms of traditional models of rhetorical situation, then, is that these "cultural moods" build by shared transmission. As Brian Massumi explains the *event of experience*, "Experience is an additive 'form of transition,' a continual motion of intersecting lines: a co-motion (commotion) of mutual nonexclusion. As William James puts it, experience never stops 'streaming,' and its streaming snowballs" (213). We can say much the same about the place of experience in the social field. The "rhetorical situation" emerges within and

among those streaming and snowballing experiences of a social field. The ecological model places less emphasis on an elemental view of rhetoric, which reads for audience(s), rhetorician(s), exigence, constraints, or text. This is not to say that these things cannot or should not be discussed, but rather than an ecological model looks to the “situation” in its wider sense by enlarging the framework and vocabulary for examining these rhetorics.

Thus, an ecological, or *affective*, rhetorical model is one that reads rhetoric both as a process of distributed emergence and as an ongoing circulation process. Deleuze and Guattari give us one example of such an affective rhetoric in their introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, where they write about the *becoming* of evolutionary processes that happen between two or more species. Rather than a hierarchical transmission of genetic information, evolution involves a kind of sharing and an emergence that happens in the in-between of species. This is what Remy Chauvin describes as an “*aparallel evolution* of two beings that have absolutely nothing to do with each other” (quoted in Deleuze and Guattari, 10). For example, write Deleuze and Guattari:

[Consider] Benveniste and Todaro’s current research on a type C virus, with its double connection to baboon DNA and the DNA of certain kinds of domestic cats. . . . [T]here is an *aparallel evolution* . . . [between] the baboon and the cat; it is obvious that they are not models or copies of each other (a becoming-baboon of the cat does not mean that the cat “plays” baboon). . . . [T]ransfers of genetic material by viruses or through other procedures, fusions of cells originating in different species, have results analogous to those of “the abominable couplings dear to antiquity and the Middle Ages.” Transversal communication between different lines scramble the genealogical trees. (1987 10-11)

The image of a viral/genetic connection between baboon and cat (two beings that, in Chauvin’s words, have absolutely nothing to do with each other) suggests a new kind of model for thinking of rhetoric’s “transversal communication” and travel in the world. A given rhetoric is not *contained* by the elements that comprise its rhetorical situation (exigence, rhetor, audience, constraints). Rather, a rhetoric emerges already infected by

the viral intensities that are circulating in the social field. Moreover, this same rhetoric will go on to evolve in *aparallel* ways: between two “species” that have absolutely nothing to do with each other. What is shared between them is *not* the situation, but certain contagions and energy. This does not mean the shared rhetoric reproduces copies or models of “original” situations (any more than the shared C virus turns a cat into a baboon). Instead, it is a conglomeration of events, moods, stories, and discourses that manage to *infect* and *connect* with other processes, events, and bodies. This trans-situational conglomeration is what we then call (in our shorthand vernacular) *a rhetorical situation*.

A NEW MODEL: DISTRIBUTED RHETORICAL ECOLOGIES

Although the standard models of rhetorical situation can tell us much about the elements that are involved in a particular situation, these same models can also mask the fluidity of rhetorics. Because rhetorical situations involve the amalgamation and mixtures of many different events and happenings that are not properly segmented into audience, text, or rhetorician, we must consider whether the standard model reflects the fullness of rhetoric's operation in the social field. Instead of only reading rhetoric in terms of an isolated situation, that is, we can also question the ways that this rhetoric emerges into a collection of events that are already in process, as well as the ways that this rhetoric is extended and changed through the emergence of *neighboring* events. Rhetorical ecologies are co-ordinating processes, moving across the same social field and within shared structures of feeling.

The original call of Austin's “weird” rhetoric, for example, has been affected by the circulation of actions, events, and encounters that form “small events loosely joined”⁷ as a kind of rhetorical-event neighborhood. Even when a multi-national corporation like

Cingular coopts the phrase, placing it within a completely antithetical framework from its original context, we find that Cingular's rhetoric becomes an *aparallel evolution* of the (original) rhetoric of "weirdness" in Austin. They mark two different rhetorical situations, of course—complete with different exigence, audience, rhetors, and constraints. But Cingular's rhetoric co-ordinates within the same neighborhood as the anti-corporate rhetoric. Thus, in the course of this evolution, the "weird rhetoric" receives what we might call an extended half-life in its range of circulation and visibility, as well as a changed shape, force, and intensity. Similarly, the anti-drug rhetoric of the Reagan-Bush era has been *expanded* through the rhetorics that emerge within the same affective network of moods, experiences, and structures of feeling. Because two (or more) rhetorics that might not be part of the same rhetorical situation often resonate with one another, we need some way to attune to that resonation. Like a neighborhood, the amalgamation of events can both extend the street's visibility (or impact) and its very contours.

In short, rhetorical theory needs some way to attune to the ways that rhetoric is distributed across the social field—not through structures of shared elements, but through structures of feeling. Rather than discarding the rhetorical situation models that we have been using up until this point, our ecological augmentation adopts a view toward the processes and events that are variously distributed across (and, indeed, *through*) the elements of rhetoric. That is, this view of rhetoric's operation attunes to those events that extend beyond the limited boundaries of elements. One potential value of such a shifted focus is the way we view *counter-rhetorics*, issues of *cooptation*, and even productive strategies of *rhetorical circulation*. If we want to understand the logics and structures of rhetorical operation, then it is important to recognize the way rhetorics are held together *trans-situationally*. Because rhetorics do not just exist in situations, but also in the radius

of their neighboring events, an ecological model might allow us to theorize *how* lived processes cause rhetorics to thrive or wither (regardless of their seeming “appropriateness” in Bitzer’s model). Strong and weak rhetorics are surrounded by event-full neighboring rhetorics that add to the structure through intense mixtures. Once we begin to expand our frameworks in these ways, we can reclaim and re-extend Bitzer’s great contribution to rhetorical theory: a view of rhetorical operation in the world.

One potential value of such a shifted focus is the way we understand the logics and structures of rhetorical operation. It is important to recognize the way rhetorics are held together trans-situationally. That is, rhetorics do not just exist in situations, but also in the radius of its neighboring events. An ecological model might allow us to theorize *how* certain rhetorics experience such intensity and duration, while others—even those that appear to address a significant exigence to a “proper” audience—falter and wither. Rhetorics are surrounded by and comprised of event-full neighboring event, material practices, and structures of feeling.

Notes

¹ Perhaps we can rephrase this notion of distribution in terms of music: the lived experience of listening to a song cannot be framed only in terms of its constituent parts; the experience also includes the distributed processes of *hearing*—and, in my apartment with the bass turned up, even *feeling* the song.

² Consider the following request made on an online pro-marijuana message board, regarding the popular D.A.R.E. program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education): “I was just reading about rituals for smoking on [this message board] and people were talking about wearing D.A.R.E shirts while they smoked up. This to me was an amazing idea, and I'd love to have one to wear when I smoke up, sort of an official shirt. So I looked around online and found <http://www.daregear.com> which sells lots of D.A.R.E stuff. But the top of the site says they only sell to teachers and cops. Anyone know a way to buy stuff from them or get a D.A.R.E. Shirt without talking to cops or teachers?” (www.smokedot.org)

³ Jokes used to circulate about Austin being the only city in the United States where the 7-11 employees also happened to have PhDs.

⁴ Interestingly enough, this phrase was generated by a local man who had no intention of directly addressing the issue of local businesses. According to a 2002 *New York Times* story: “[The phrase was born when] Red Wassenich watched unhappily as Austin, his funky, once affordable hometown, had been transformed into a high-tech boomtown. . . . He and his wife, Karen Pavelka, printed bumper stickers, and the phrase soon began popping up around town” (“Battle”).

⁵ The call circulates widely in public sectors. For example, the creators of keepaustinweird.com cry out with manifesto-like gusto: “Take back the real source of Austin's weirdness: You the day-in day-out, blue collar, pink-haired weirdo. Slogans, T-shirts, and hats don't make Austin odd. Being odd does” (www.keepaustinweird.com). Indeed, the pink-haired weirdos have taken up the call with incredible fervor. Some local residents have taken their strange struggle online, answering the call in a variety of ways. One wired Austinite offers a rather detailed web essay that answers the question “Why is Austin Weird?” His essay is filled with story after story of strange events that reflect what he calls Austin’s “solidarity of the ‘weird’” (Hall).

⁶ Even if we allow for a technologization (or a textualization) of this oratorical model (such as speeches delivered on TV or the net).

⁷ Here I purposefully reference David Weinberger’s *Small Pieces Loosely Joined*, which makes a similar kind of argument about networking and social ecologies.

Chapter Three: Rhetorical Analysis, General Equivalence, and Circulation

In our age, porousness and heterotopic spaces have to do with the willingness just to look rather than to always be saying. This is violence to the convention that demands a coherent, blessed world.

--Helen Liggett

In the previous chapter's reading of Austin's "weird rhetoric," we did not spend much time considering the significations involved in the various discourses. Instead, we closely examined the discourses' operation and movement. The reason for this different focus points back to our discussion of the mutuality, or circulation, among discursive and affective dimensions of rhetoric. As John Trimbur suggests, the circulation of texts create and are created by a kind of experiential value that is not coterminous with the text's signifying meaning. In his essay "Composition and the Circulation of Writing," Trimbur points out that reading texts primarily in terms of meaning-interpretation tends to ignore the larger context of their cultural operation. "[B]y concentrating on the student writer interpreting the world at the point of [meaning] production," remarks Trimbur, "[we] . . . foreshorten the delivery system, the circuits of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption through which writing circulates as it takes on cultural value and worldly force" (194). The question then becomes how to "imagine writing as more than just the moment of production when meaning gets made. How can we see writing as it circulates through linked moments of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption?" (196). Part of this circulation involves the circulation and experience of affective intensities, sensation, and livedness. As Trimbur writes, "[T]he circulation of cultural products or media messages takes place at the phenomenal level of sense perception" (207). Signification is thus only part of a text's active relevance within a cultural context.

For example, Trimbur looks at the way textbook anthologies—the “readings” that are often packaged with “rhetorics”—reproduce material in ways that mask the contextual tensions of these readings. “Packaged in anthologies and uniform in appearance,” says Trimbur, “written texts take on an equivalent look that belies their actual circulation in the world” (195). Reproduced in black and white, the same size and kind of paper, and grouped in sections that are subheaded by equivalent topics (“Gender,” “Narrative,” “Film,” “Evaluative Argument”), the original texts are thus removed from their context of circulation in a wider ecology. Trimbur gives the example of a textbook’s reproduction of a *Rolling Stone* article that has been removed from its context of accompanying advertisements, letters to the editor, classified section, and so forth (195). At the same time, this recontextualized material (as textbook reading) hardly receives any attention. It is as if the repackaging has no effect at all, but exists as a perfect analog to the text’s other contexts. Contrary to this analogic illusion, however, Trimbur argues that circulation is inseparable from discussions of rhetoric and writing, even though the materiality of texts is often degraded in comparison to the more privileged work of reading for meaning.

In short, Trimbur points out that rhetoric has effects besides its circulation from points of meaning production to points of meaning reception. Carole Blair’s work on material rhetorics is helpful for thinking through this distinction. In “Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric’s Materiality,” Blair claims that we can theorize “rhetoric [as] one (important, though not exclusive) practice by which realities and constructions of power are constituted” (51). Blair is responding to the tendency of rhetorical scholars in both Communication Studies and Composition to conflate *rhetoric* with *signifying discourse*. “Although it is not impossible to find a contemporary rhetorician defining rhetoric without reference to symbols,” she writes, “it is at least

unusual, whether the rhetorician works in speech communication, in English, or in some other field” (19). Consequently, Blair pushes us to look beyond the discursive manifestations of rhetoric in order to ask *what else* is going on in rhetoric. “There are some things that rhetoric’s symbolicity can’t account for,” she writes. “One is its consequence” (19). While we may argue that the world is articulated in discursive/symbolic meanings, this statement does not consider the material effects of that discourse. Nor does it account for the circulation of those effects.

Blair suggests that the theoretical-pedagogical emphasis on discursivity tends to overlook the effects and consequences that are generated by and through rhetoricity. She asks, for example, “[W]hat about the things that happen as a result of texts that lie outside the goal orientation, *or even the perceptual field*, of the rhetor?” (22; emphasis mine). If we tend to read primarily in the hopes of uncovering meaning and symbolicity, Blair and Trimbur suggest that we may be missing important dimensions of rhetoric that do not collapse into signification. Identifying some of these same problems, Lawrence Grossberg suggests one possible reading of such rhetorical effects by proposing

a theory for cultural studies which does not identify culture with communication, and which can describe the complexity of effects and relations circulating through and around culture. Such a theory will be . . . concerned with particular configurations of practices, how they produce effects, and how such effects are organized and deployed. (*We Gotta Get Out* 45).

The differences between this approach and other theoretical readings of culture lie in the emphasis on effects taken *as such*, rather than as symptoms of deeper (hermeneutic) problems. Grossberg instead focuses upon the effects and uses of cultural texts, despite whatever meanings they may hold at any given moment and place. His is a question about the social *operation* of texts, in other words, that does not conflate effect with meaning. “[Cultural] events have to be taken literally,” writes Grossberg, “in the facticity of their singular existence, rather than as texts to be interpreted” (49). In order to avoid

losing the question of operation inside the maze of meaning-questions, Grossberg looks to what he calls an articulation, or “the construction of one set of relations out of another. . .” (54). This process, he explains, “links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meaning to that reality, this experience to those politics. And these links are themselves articulated into larger structures, etc” (54). Such articulation *is* the linking process itself, which should not be confused with links that get made. In the language of the previous chapter, such acts of linking are the generation of events in ecologies.

Because rhetorics are not handed to us in a package, we do not come to a given public rhetoric all at once. Even the bodies “involved” in a certain rhetorical sphere do not necessarily experience a rhetoric in the same way, as if public rhetorics were a monolithic entity. If we agree that rhetorics are processes and loose proximities of events that grow and transmute (almost virally), then we find ourselves left with a question about positionality. That is, bodies-in-public are situated, or positioned, in highly singular ways. Just as the pressures and impacts of a weather system differently affect various houses, neighborhoods, and streets within a single city, rhetorics entail distributed impacts. Public rhetorics are thus inextricable from issues of circulation and positionality, of bodies-in-public. In rhetoric and composition, however, our focus on matters of circulation has been somewhat hampered by strong investments in the strategy of rhetorical analysis. As we will discuss in the following chapter, rhetorical analysis has arguably expanded into a field wide pedagogical practice—an expansion that has significant repercussions for the ways we approach the pedagogical discussion of public rhetorics. According to Trimbur, when “ideological critique and the interpretive essay [become] the main vehicles of cultural studies in the writing classroom. . . a sector of students learned to do sophisticated readings of a wide variety of cultural texts, [while] the circulation of cultural products receded from view and become unavailable for

analysis” (199). While my goal in the following chapter is not to critique or erase analysis as a hermeneutic tool, I side with Trimbur’s argument that, far too often in our analyses, cultural processes and circulation tend to disappear. Our (pedagogical) practices of analysis tend to shy away from engaging the action of circulation and event-ness within what I have previously called rhetorical ecologies. Consequently, one of the goals of this chapter will be to produce an augmented reading strategy that accounts for the distributed nature of rhetorical ecologies and its distributed effects and events, as well as the different situations of bodies-in-rhetorical-ecologies.

ANALYSIS, EXPLICATION, AND CLASSROOM RHETORIC

Many different practices could easily fall under the heading of analysis. There is, for example, the kind of formal textual analysis introduced by New Critical theory, which emphasized “close reading” of texts. In another mode, there are a number of analytical practices that take on a more critical stance toward culture and social practices. Whereas this mode of analysis is aimed at transformation, the formal textual analysis proposed by the New Critics did not take social change as a *telos*. It is difficult, in other words, to talk about “analysis” in broad strokes. Nevertheless, for anyone who has taught composition for almost any length of time, the rhetorical analysis assignment hardly needs an introduction. Though analysis itself is approached in many different ways, Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor offer this basic definition: “Rhetorical analysis uses an identifiable vocabulary drawn from the rhetorical tradition and/or from a particular school or theorist” in order to discuss a text or situation (183). Some rhetorical analyses adopt a version of classical rhetorical theory in order to read various texts for their strategies. For example, rhetorical analysis assignments frequently ask students to identify a text’s use of ethos, pathos, and logos throughout the argument. The text can be

a written text, or, perhaps, a more “visual” text like a commercial, advertisement, or webpage. Other assignments range more broadly, asking students to examine the rhetorical situation by identifying the elements of audience, claims, and kinds of evidence. This prompt from one rhetorically-grounded writing textbook is a typical approach to rhetorical analysis: “Select one reading from [this section] to analyze. Write an essay in which you describe how this reading works as an argument and evaluate how effective it is for its intended readers” (*Writing the World* 529). Other rhetorical analysis assignments might ask students to:

- Identify the intended and invoked readers of the text.
- Identify what exigence has led to the need for this argument.
- Identify the claims (main and supporting).
- Identify the appeals used to persuade the audience of these claims
- Identify the kinds of evidence is used to support the claims
- Identify the author’s persona/ethos
- Identify how the author uses imagery/visuals/design/emotive language in order to persuade the audience.

Whether assignments adopt the relatively simple terms of (pseudo)Aristotelian appeals, or the more complex questions of modified Bitzerian rhetorical situation, the theory is often easy enough for students to learn quickly. The prompts above, for example, can be made portable and applied to almost any kind of text: essay, speech, advertisement, film, song, and so forth. Thus, from the newest to the most experienced writing teacher, rhetorical analysis presents a rather manageable form of rhetorical writing pedagogy.

Digging into the roots of rhetorical analysis’ pedagogical popularity, we find resonations with the faculty psychology and modernist scientific philosophy born in the seventeenth-century. As Richard Cherwitz and James Hikins suggest, “It was not until the

ascendancy of science and scientific method that significant rigor was introduced into the quest for a definitive explanation of ‘rhetoric.’ Rhetoricians . . . then placed new emphasis on the new science of the mind” (56). The scientific bent of faculty psychology popularized the notion that knowledge was both objective and available for discovery through data and experience. In *The Methodical Memory*, Crowley carefully exposes the ways in which seventeenth- and eighteenth-century modernist philosophers tended to suggest that “minds, as well as the discourses they produce, reflect the world . . .” (9). The way to *know* the world (and truth) was a matter of becoming familiar with that world. Arguments entered into the equation very little. Crowley explains, “The faith of current-traditional rhetoric was that the dissemination of knowledge, if suitably packaged, would eliminate disagreements among informed persons” (1990 157). Discovery of truth was a process that could be correct or wrong, but never contingent. The “rhetor” discovered something about his studied object through careful processes of experimentation. He then communicated these discoveries to the best of his ability in language.

The epistemological function of faculty psychology tended to place rhetoric under erasure insofar as “knowing” merely involved an *analytic familiarity* with the object. Rhetoric was nothing more than a transmission of (truthful) content. “Discovery or general ideas and of truth was treated as the business of logic or, more broadly, of the scientific method,” write Cherwitz and Hikins (57). The “rhetoric” of eighteenth-century rhetoricians like Hugh Blair tended to stress *investigation methods* for becoming familiar with the object under study. Once the investigator thoroughly knows her subject, she can use rhetoric as a means of transmitting that information to others. “In a single stroke,” writes Crowley, “Blair placed the entire process of invention beyond the province of rhetorical study, arguing that the art of rhetoric can only teach people how to manage the

arguments they have discovered by other means” (1990 11). What we have come to call “current-traditional rhetoric” is a lasting offspring of faculty psychology. Crowley eloquently draws the genealogy between these two, exposing the ways in which “[t]he epistemological underpinnings of current-traditional rhetoric were assembled in the eighteenth century” (1990 xii). Crowley shows how nineteenth century rhetorical education directly relied upon the texts of faculty psychology for training in rhetoric. The rhetorical curricula of American colleges overwhelmingly used texts by George Campbell, Hugh Blair, and Richard Whately in order to teach rhetorical invention and management.

Indeed, the development of composition pedagogy in American colleges long continued this dependence upon faculty psychology’s principles by privileging reflection, investigation, and method. Composition texts instructed students to choose subjects, investigate them through careful reflection and analysis, and then transmit that information to readers through carefully managed language. Writing was less concerned with invention than with the strengthening of a writer’s reflective or analytic powers. As Crowley says of one such text, “[T]he message . . . was no doubt clear: if you want to be a writer who is worthy of being read, you must garner all the knowledge you can, continually exercise your mental faculties on it, and reflect the operations of your mind as you do so” (1990 60). Before writing about a subject, therefore, the student was told to place herself in a position of familiarity. If she failed to get to know her subject well, the writing itself was doomed to failure.

One of the lasting legacies from faculty psychology and its rhetorics, then, was a strong preference for analysis. Crowley argues that this is George Campbell’s preference, generated by his association between rhetoric and empiricism. Campbell believed that rhetorical method and arrangement should follow the “natural knowledge” of the thinking

mind. “In other words,” Crowley writes, “the arrangement of a discourse should directly reflect the kinds and sequences of the processes that had created it. . . . Such an arrangement would jog the memories of both rhetor and audience, since it would mirror the way ideas had been stored there in the first place” (1990 44). For Campbell, language mirrored thought (or should mirror thought, at least). Because he believed that the “natural knowledge” moved from particulars to universals, analysis was thus his preferred method for rhetoric. In composition pedagogy, moreover, this preference spilled over into a privileged position for analytical writing, “where the connecting links between the parts of the discourse depended upon the associative movement of the writer’s mind. . .” (Crowley 130). Thinking and logical writing were seen as associational at the level of particulars.¹

According to Crowley, not much has changed in certain aspects of composition pedagogy. “Recent studies of college writing programs suggests that current-traditional rhetoric is alive and well,” she writes. “At least half of such programs in the country—perhaps more—follow its pedagogy” (1990 139). In a number of different ways, composition textbooks have long born out this preference for analytic familiarity. Maxine Hairston, in *A Contemporary Rhetoric*, opens the text with a letter to student readers. Her letter warns students that a lack of analytical skills will prevent them from writing well and from engaging as critically as possible in daily life. According to Hairston, *A Contemporary Rhetoric* seek to build methods for analysis in order to meet both of these goals:

By studying and analyzing the methods of expression and persuasion, you can become a more effective and articulate writer and speaker. The other goal of this text is to help you understand and evaluate the ways in which other people use language to inform and persuade you. . . . You probably recognize that you will be able to function better as both a student and a person if you use language well. . . . The person who is not aware of the ways in which language is a tool for control is going to be handicapped in both his thoughts and his actions. (xi).

For Hairston, the bottom line is that a successful (non-handicapped, fully functioning, effective, articulate) writer and reader is one who can analyze, understand, and evaluate the ways in which language is being used—and how it can be used. In short, a “contemporary rhetoric” is one that focuses on analytic skills.

And Hairston is not alone. Both Lynn Quitman Troyka’s *Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers* and Diane Hacker’s *Rules for Writers* present a set of detailed elements of the “writing situation,” which the student writer can then use to develop an essay. As Troyka explains, “Writing begins with thinking. When you are given a writing assignment, you are immediately cast into a writing situation. The decisions you make as you write an essay depend on the particulars of each writing situation: topic, purpose, audience, and special requirements” (14). Likewise, Hacker describes the writing situation as a combination of subject, information, purpose, audience, length, and design. Each of these elements, in turn, has its own special questions for analysis. The topic, for example, must be analyzed through the writer’s own storehouse of knowledge: “All writers depend on their accumulated experiences and education as they write. . . . As you think through and gather ideas for your topic, your task is to establish a *focus*, or a point of view, about the topic and *support* for that focus” (15). Throughout both of these texts (and many others like them), analysis is a recurring and integral part of the writing process.

The overlap between rhetorical analysis and the investigation methods of faculty psychology thus rests in a pedagogical imperative of *explication*. In composition pedagogy, for instance, the explication imperative shows up in the ways that we justify the practice of composition to students. Edward Corbett’s warning from his seminal *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* can still be heard in composition classrooms and textbooks today: “Hundreds of [students] are defeated every year in their

composition classes because they will not or cannot define their subject” (35). That is, students fail because they have not thoroughly explicated their own thoughts. Similarly, Andrea Lunsford and Robert Connors’ *New St. Martin’s Handbook* resembles a majority of composition textbooks and handbooks when the authors encourage students to begin a draft by “writing out an explicit thesis statement. Such a statement allows you to articulate all your major lines of argument. . .” (500, emphasis in original). In the introduction, for example, Lunsford and Connors promise students that the value of writing courses lies in its ability to help student writers to make their thoughts and their arguments more explicit. They explain: “Your writing course is in many ways a foundation course in critical thinking, providing guidance and practice in figuring out what you think about particular topics and issues, in articulating your thoughts, and in then convincing others that your ideas are worthy of consideration” (1). The first-year composition course is here imagined as the place where students will move into a new level of explication. Another text, *The Aims of Argument*, begins the first chapter by introducing argument in its etymological association with clarity: “In this book we will use the word [argument] in a sense closer to that of the Latin verb from which it derives: *arguere*, ‘to make clear’” (3). Once again, we see that the promise of rhetoric and composition lies in its ability to help students “define their subjects.”

The explication imperative of composition, which is arguably the epistemological flywheel of rhetorical analysis, centers its work around twin functions: reading and writing, the scope of what is broadly imagined as *critical thinking*. Composition pedagogy is often tied to critical thinking as a goal, which Lunsford and Connors describe to students as “essentially just the process by which we make sense of all the information around us. As such, critical thinking is a crucial component of argument, for it guides us in recognizing, formulating, and examining the arguments that are important

to us” (70). No more will students be mute in the face of “all the information around us,” for now they will “make sense” of it. Student writers will now *recognize, formulate, examine* those dominant arguments. They will become interpreters of the very discourse that surrounds them. Lunsford and Connors tell students that this process of critical thinking demands the work of recognition—making explicit—what might otherwise remain hidden under/the/cover.

In fact, many composition textbooks have approached the seemingly broader practice of cultural analysis in terms of “critical thinking” and “critical reading.” The methods of these textbooks do not just take individual arguments as their field of analysis, but they also read the elements of cultural production. For example, *Seeing & Writing*, a textbook that presents a semiotic approach to everyday life, encourages students to analyze the images, places, and events that they encounter in popular culture. In the text’s introduction, the authors tell students that their goal should be a kind of *critical literacy* that is able to explicate the world’s meanings that might otherwise remain hidden:

We seek to assist you in becoming more aware of . . . the skills identified with both verbal and visual literacy. These skills will enable you to learn, recognize, understand, and create compelling and convincing messages that will be understood by many people within and beyond the halls of higher education. (4)

Seeing & Writing teaches students these “literacy skills” through a series of observations: looking at a text (an image, piece of writing, or other scene) and then asking, as one of the headings in *Seeing & Writing* instructs, “What does this text say?” (15). Students are taught to decode the meanings of the text’s narrative. “Every text or image is communicating something to the reader or viewer,” explain the *Seeing & Writing* authors, which means:

American culture is often driven by narrative, by a desire to . . . tell stories. Scholars who study literacy and visual perception refer to people as *homo*

significans—“meaning makers.” One of the easiest and most effective ways to respond to a verbal text or an image is to determine its message, the “story” it tells. (15)

By asking students to “determine [a text’s] message,” or the “story” it tells, *Seeing & Writing* engages in the foreshortened pedagogy Trimbur identifies, focusing primarily on points of meaning production and meaning reception. Although *Seeing & Writing* is a markedly different kind of text from *The St. Martin’s Handbook*, we can hear resonations between its own kind of explication privilege and that of the more traditional composition texts. That is, *Seeing & Writing*’s goals of “learn[ing], recogniz[ing], understand[ing], and creat[ing] compelling and convincing messages” is not too different from the goals of “critical thinking” (“recognizing, formulating, and examining the arguments that are important to us”) found in *The St. Martin’s Handbook*.

A GENERAL EQUIVALENCE

The brief history above weaves together the threads of explication and analysis. But, delving further into the pedagogy of rhetorical analysis itself, we discover that many composition textbooks provide specific frameworks and vocabularies for students to follow in their analyses. For instance, Nancy Wood’s *Perspectives on Argument* models a rhetorical analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” in order to guide students in reading other rhetorical texts. Before introducing King’s letter, Wood poses questions that students can ask themselves when writing a similar analysis: What is the exigence for the text? Who is the audience? What are the constraints involved (369-370)? Wood challenges students to identify the way King uses *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*—providing examples from the letter for each proof. She then reproduces King’s letter with extensive marginalia that prompt students to see the rhetorical devices at work. Take Woods’ comments written directly beside one of King’s most moving lines, “We know

through painful experience that freedom . . . must be demanded by the oppressed.” In the margin beside this line, Wood asks students to “[i]dentify and analyze the emotional proof” and to explain “[w]hat human motives and values . . . King appeal[s] to” in this paragraph (376-377). While this question can prompt students to read King’s letter through rhetorical lenses, her questions also act as a model for students’ future readings of other texts. If students can learn to identify King’s appeals to “human motives and values,” then perhaps they can identify other writers’ motives and values.

Similarly, Winifred Bryan Horner models a rhetorical analysis using King’s letter as an application. After quoting King’s opening paragraph, Horner explains that this section reflects King’s masterful use of *ethos*:

He appeals to the goodwill of his readers by making it clear that he is answering their particular criticisms because he knows that even though they have criticized his actions as “unwise and untimely” he also understands that they are “men of genuine good will” and that their criticisms are “sincerely put forth.” His final sentence—that he will try to answer their statement in “patient and reasonable terms”—establishes him as a person of intelligence and common sense. (52)

Horner also encourages students to note how King uses *pathos* by asking his readers to put themselves in the positions of people who feel the sting of segregation. “By demonstrating how the family can be hurt by segregation,” explains Horner, “King appeals to his readers’ emotions. . .” (57). Like Wood’s model, attention to this particular rhetorical text is presented partly as a methodological abstraction. The point is not to engage with King’s specific rhetorical scenes, but to gain a vocabulary and a method that can be applied to any other text that the student encounters.

Recalling Trimbur’s words, these kinds of textbook methodologies and models bring the issue of circulation (back) to the table. Not only do textbook reproductions of King’s letter flatten out attention to the letter’s own circulation and contexts of (re)production, but Wood’s text (and nearly every other composition textbook) ends the

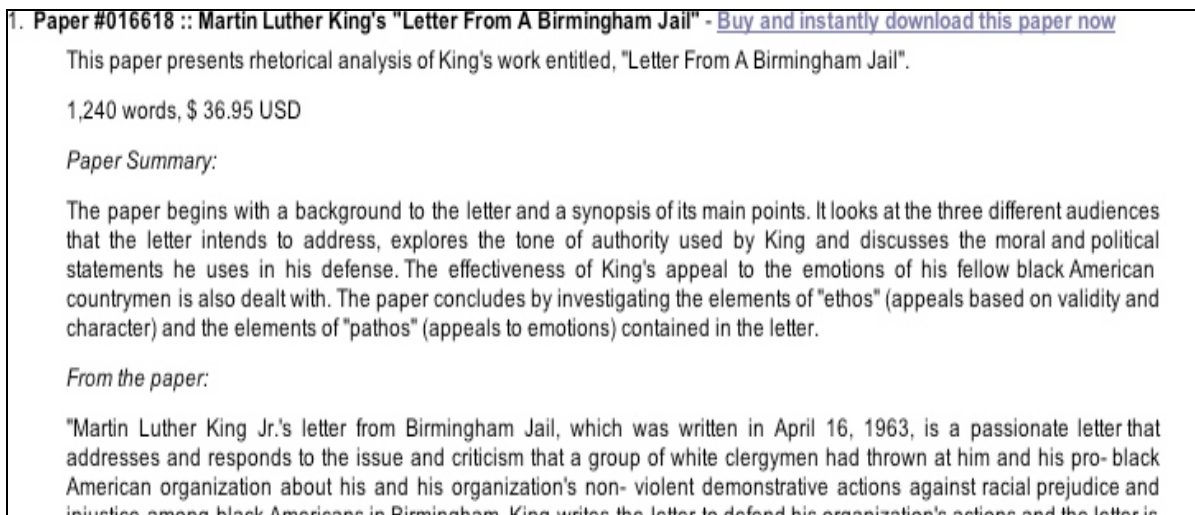
story of rhetorical analysis here. Outside of the occasional student-authored analyses that are often used as examples in textbooks, we find almost no mention of the actual products that result from widespread practices of rhetorical analysis in undergraduate composition classrooms.² Nevertheless, studying the circulation of student rhetorical analyses can reveal significant insights into what such pedagogies produce. We might benefit from asking what gets produced and circulated in the act of rhetorical analysis.

Let us begin with one of the most thriving current sites of rhetorical analysis: online paper mills, where students can purchase and download complete essays. One such website called “AcaDemon” features a rhetorical analysis of Martin Luther King’s “Letter From a [sic] Birmingham Jail,” which can be purchased for nearly \$37.00 (see Fig. 3.1). In the paper’s teaser (a standard feature of essays-for-sale websites), we find that this essay appears capable of accomplishing what a rhetorical analysis assignment is supposed to deliver, according to many rhetorical analysis assignment prompts. As the writer states in the essay’s introduction:

The paper begins with a background to the letter and a synopsis of its main points. It looks at the three different audiences that the letter intends to address, explores the tone of authority used by King and discusses the moral and political statements he uses in his defense. The effectiveness of King's appeal to the emotions of his fellow black American countrymen is also dealt with. The paper concludes by investigating the elements of "ethos" (appeals based on validity and character) and the elements of "pathos" (appeals to emotions) contained in the letter.

This paper promises to answer some of the very questions that Wood and Horner’s texts pose: *Who is the audience? How does the rhetor present his own ethos? What is the claim? What kinds of evidence does the rhetor use to support this claim? How does the rhetor use appeals?* In fact, the student analysis-for-sale of King’s letter sounds quite similar to Wood’s own analysis. While Wood’s textbook asks students to analyze the audience carefully in their constraints and warrants, the student herself announces that

her paper “looks at the three different audiences that the letter intends to address, explores the tone of authority used by King and discusses the moral and political statements he uses in his defense. The effectiveness of King's appeal to the emotions of his fellow black American countrymen is also dealt with.” Judging from the teaser’s blurb, we might even call it a decent model of the kind of analysis Wood seeks.



1. Paper #016618 :: Martin Luther King's "Letter From A Birmingham Jail" - [Buy and instantly download this paper now](#)

This paper presents rhetorical analysis of King's work entitled, "Letter From A Birmingham Jail".

1,240 words, \$ 36.95 USD

Paper Summary:

The paper begins with a background to the letter and a synopsis of its main points. It looks at the three different audiences that the letter intends to address, explores the tone of authority used by King and discusses the moral and political statements he uses in his defense. The effectiveness of King's appeal to the emotions of his fellow black American countrymen is also dealt with. The paper concludes by investigating the elements of "ethos" (appeals based on validity and character) and the elements of "pathos" (appeals to emotions) contained in the letter.

From the paper:

"Martin Luther King Jr.'s letter from Birmingham Jail, which was written in April 16, 1963, is a passionate letter that addresses and responds to the issue and criticism that a group of white clergymen had thrown at him and his pro- black American organization about his and his organization's non- violent demonstrative actions against racial prejudice and injustice among black Americans in Birmingham. King writes the letter to defend his organization's actions and the letter is

Fig. 3.1. The shopper’s preview a rhetorical analysis of Martin Luther King’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail” from AcaDemon.Com

With rather unsubtle names like “A+ Essays,” “EZ Essays,” “Essay Depot” and “Got Essays,” online paper mills such as AcaDemon add an interesting new version of an old problem in the writing classroom. As *New York Observer* editor Suzy Hansen remarked in her August 2004 mini-expose of paper mills:

These days, stressed-out perfectionists and lazy no-goods alike can Google their way to an astounding array of plagiarism Web sites. Many companies sell term papers, essays and book reports by the thousands, for as much as \$250 a pop, all just a click and Mom's credit card away, and all in the privacy of an undergraduate's dorm room. (“Dear Plagiarists”)

Essays offered by paper mills cover the traditional assignments that any college student might be required to write: history research essays, biology lab reports, sociology

and anthropology essays covering the spectrum of cultural topics. Literary analyses of standard texts—from Shakespeare’s plays to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*—are in no short supply. For instance, AcaDemon offers an essay that “introduces and discusses the works of [Emily] Dickenson and [Fredrick] Douglas, compares their backgrounds and discusses their beliefs with regards to literature” (Academon.com). This 1,785 word comparative literary analysis comes complete with MLA documentation and works cited page (boasting three sources, according to AcaDemon’s teaser). Students can download the entire essay immediately—after paying the hefty fee of \$50.95. Other sites feature more democratic options, allowing students to both upload and download entire papers for free. With such a spectrum to choose from, students looking for papers covering standard texts or assignments have no shortage.

Besides analyses of traditional texts, online paper mills also offer plenty of non-traditional “text” analyses that perform the same functions. For the pricey sum of \$71.95, AcaDemon allows students to purchase a rhetorical analysis of an anti-AIDS campaign featuring Magic Johnson. In the teaser preview from this essay’s introduction, a framework of classical rhetorical theory sets the stage for analysis:

Rhetoric is the use of speech for persuasion. Different theorists of rhetoric have differing views of the nature of persuasive argument. Aristotle had a particular view of the art of rhetoric which he espoused in his *Rhetoric*, and it involves a differentiation in the types of argument offered, the purpose of that argument, and how effective the argument may be given its nature and the elements that constitute it. Aristotle's approach to the rhetorical situation and to the nature of rhetoric can be applied to a particular text, in this case the advertising campaign set into motion by and centering on Magic Johnson, the athlete who announced that he had contracted the AIDS virus and who then appeared in television spots and other advertising media. . . . (Academon.com)

Other paper mills offer analyses of films, songs, and even an analysis of the rhetorical situation of Earl Spencer's eulogy for Princess Diana. While the texts themselves vary dramatically in terms of what is being analyzed, the framework of analysis itself remains

startlingly similar from one description to the next. One paper for sale sites essays from the semiotics-based *Signs of Life* in order perform a gendered reading of the movie *Election* (see Fig. 3.2). While the plagiarized essay’s teaser exposes some rather troubled readings of both the film and the essays from *Signs of Life*, the paper also manages to site language and ideas adopted from the textbook:

Everyday, we see, hear, read and experience various degrees of discrimination based on gender and sexuality. These ideas influence our perception of reality and what attitudes to expect from our peers and colleagues. Literary works often focus on these aspects of society and how they are portrayed in film.
(Mytermpapers.com)

The essay then attempts to explicate what we can assume will be the main argument of this paper: “More than often, the portrayal of women in television is seen in a less positive light than that of their male counterparts.” The student proceeds to read *Election* as an example of such negative gender representations in media—representations that ideologically shape attitudes about gender and sexuality in popular culture.

The image shows a screenshot of an online paper mill advertisement. At the top, the title "Battle Of The Sexes" is displayed in green. Below the title is a block of text that is a plagiarized version of the text from the previous block. The text is in a small, green font and includes a copyright notice for "My Term Papers .com" from 1999-2004. Below the text, there is a line of text stating "Approximate Word count = 1241", "Approximate Pages = 5", and "(250 words per page double spaced)". Below this is a red link that says "CLICK HERE for Custom Research!!". At the bottom of the advertisement, there are three blue buttons: "OF FREE ESSAYS", "Top 50 Essay Sites", and "TOP 100 TERM PAPER SITES". To the right of these buttons is a blue box with the text "Top 75 Term Paper Sites" in green.

Fig. 3.2: Analysis of *Election* for sale at an online paper mill

Flawed though it may be, this analysis manages to use the methodology proposed by textbooks that focus on a critical approach to popular culture. Using the textbook's very language and methodology, this student paper analyzes *Election* as an example of meaning's construction in signs. Indeed, the student writer follows the *Signs of Life* authors in their methodological equation of literary and cultural interpretation:

You can interpret the popularity of programs like *The X-Files*, for example, in the same manner as you would interpret, say, a short story because *The X-Files*, too, constitutes a kind of sign. A sign is something, *anything*, that carries a meaning. . . . The world of signs could be called a kind of text, the text of America's popular culture. (4)

In this way, the textbook presents a version of culture that is readable through points of meaning production to points of meaning reception. That is, culture (as a text) is analyzable in its contents, which are open to explication. As *Signs of Life* tells students: "When analyzing a movie. . . your object is to interpret the cultural significance of your topic" (289). Moreover, the authors tell student readers that gender is a coded construction shaped by various kinds of media and social stories, "like any other cultural mythology" (439). The student essay writer extracts the interpretive method found in her textbook and attempts to replicate it perfectly in her own reading of *Election*. This perfect replication is what gives this paper mill essay such expensive currency. For students asked to write an analysis with citations from specific textbooks—not to mention students asked to write analyses through the lens of certain vocabulary—the online paper mills have become a new resource for students who are looking for a shortcut.

Bemoan the ease of plagiarism. Bemoan classroom assignments that are not creative enough for preventing a generic paper.³ Bemoan fact that the textbooks themselves have become somewhat *generic* in their approach to rhetorical analysis, as David Bleich argues. According to Bleich, the genre of argument textbooks, which reflect the "rhetorical" aspect of most rhetorically-grounded composition texts, tend to "isolat[e]

a structure of thought” and use that structure synecdochically to stand for the thinking process as a whole operation. The question of terminology’s universalization—a universalization partly exposed by the proliferation of paper mills churning out rhetorical analyses—thus enters us into a nexus of textbook methodologies and the ensuing practices and theories that they shape. As Bleich suggests, we can look at the generic properties of rhetorically-based writing textbooks to ask how their “special language of direct instruction” might explain why it is that such a method or pedagogical approach can be universalized to such a degree.

But the proliferation of specifically *rhetorical* analyses at paper mills exposes more troubles than merely the practice of plagiarism. The ubiquity of analyses-for-hire is a testament to ways that rhetoric—an architectonic, productive practice concerned with contingencies and contexts—is being taught from a body of very methodological *equivalence* and *exchangeability*. A student in one of my classes could write an analysis that might easily be submitted in another class situated in a different location, social ecology, and other set of contingent factors. The situated body of an analyst becomes immaterial to the rhetorical analysis itself, making the reading somewhat of a disembodied act. Beyond the context of the text’s original situation, moreover, matters of complex circulation never enter into the reading itself. The pedagogical versions of the rhetorical analysis tend to overlook the place, time, or circumstances of the analyst, since the rhetorical features of the text remain the same. It should come as no surprise, then, that paper mills have found themselves doing such brisk business.

This thread of general equivalence within a supposedly “rhetorical” production ought to give us pause. Not only are the essays themselves equivalent but there is also an equivalence of knowledge that occurs in the process of explication. As Jim Corder writes in “Rhetorical Analysis of Writing,” rhetorical analysis may not be a useful way of

uncovering anything that was not already known in advance of the analysis. According to Corder:

One analyzes when one has a sense of what to look at, when one has a sense of what analysis is for. A rhetorical analysis of an essay, for example, useful and stimulating as it may be, is then more nearly an end than a beginning. A teacher in the classroom can of course use a rhetorical analysis to good effect, showing voice, structure, or other features of the essay's workings, but the rhetorical analysis often can only generate copies of itself. (226)

Because the terms of analysis have already been laid out in advance, the analysis always manages to “discover” exactly what the analyst already knew in advance: that there are gendered and racialized codes in operation, or that there are pathetic elements at work in argument, or that the author had a particular audience in mind. While there is value in such reading, of course, it also places analysis within a realm of general equivalency. The analysis produced is equivalent to the terms that the reader brought to the text from the beginning. Consequently, as Corder says, this kind of analysis is not a useful *beginning*, but it is already an *end* of reading.

While this does not mean that gendered and racial codes, or classical forms of stasis and appeals, are not present within a given text, such analytical strategies indicate a kind of narrowed approach to reading cultural texts. The explication method may not be able to place cultural analysis in the fullest possible context of culture's operation. “The rhetorical analyst does not approach a text innocently asking, ‘Now let's see what is here. I have no idea what I might find,’” say Jeanne Fahstock and Marie Secor. “Rhetorical analysts already have a pretty good general idea of what sorts of things to look for” (195). A ironic doubled-critique runs deep in Fahstock and Secor's words here: not only does the analyst have an idea of what the text under analysis will yield, thanks to the vocabulary and terministic lenses provided prior to the reading, but this idea will be a *general* idea. The analysis' “general idea” is generically independent of the analyst's own

embodied situatedness, which makes the analysis itself a generic product across texts and rhetorical situations. Corder frames this generic production in terms of patterns: “A rhetorical analysis is likely to work as a pattern; what is done with one essay can often be done with another, and another” (226). Perhaps this is why plagiarized analyses (like an analysis of King’s letter or a gendered reading of *Election*) can pass into a kind of general currency: the terms of analysis are equivalent, generic, exchangeable. “A rhetorical analysis is relentlessly functional,” argue Fahnestock and Secor (177), which allows for methodological transportability from classroom to classroom. What a student at one university finds in “reading” an advertisement (the gendered codes, the classed and racialized images) is equivalent to what a student at a different university might find. In Corder’s terms, what can be done with one critical analysis can often be done with another.

No sense in discounting the value of good general idea, of course. General ideas quickly orient us in what might otherwise seem like indecipherable mazes. My general idea of New York’s subway system has saved me many times during trips through the city. Yet the question of rhetoric as a process cannot be easily collapsed within the practice of rhetorical analysis. According to Fahnestock and Secor, “As we talk about rhetorical *analysis*, . . . it is important to remember that rhetoric . . . developed in antiquity as a heuristic rather than a hermeneutic art. Rhetoric was not originally a theory of interpretation or a methodology for analysis. . .” (178). Rather than offering a mapped hermeneutical method, rhetorical theory originally offered a theory of oratorical production. (Or, in Fahnestock and Secor’s words, rhetoric originally had a *heuristic* value.) In looking at the generic elements of “a” rhetoric, we erase the specific processes and actions that are deployed in rhetoric’s live(d) circulations. As we saw in the previous chapter, rhetoric is an ecology of discourses, material practices, and embodied

experience, which places rhetorical operation within a realm of *the specific*. We are still left with the challenge of tuning into the specificity of public rhetorical operations without resorting to abstraction and the generic. To put the challenge in Trimbur's terms: How can we still "read" the circulation processes that give writing and rhetoric their specific cultural force?

Rhetorical theory has long wrestled with this tension between the general and the specific. Gorgias's "On the Nonexistent or On Nature" offers us a complex understanding of this tension: "I say that nothing exists; then that if it exists it is unknowable; lastly, even if it exists and is knowable, nevertheless it cannot be directly communicated to anyone else" (quoted in Untersteiner 145). Mario Untersteiner untangles this puzzle by suggesting that Gorgias does not imagine nothing literally exists. Rather, Gorgias is observing the way that nothing exists without contradiction. This observation forms the kernel of what Untersteiner calls the sophist's tragic epistemology:

[T]ruth cannot . . . be incarnated in logos. For when we seek to grasp the contents of thought by which thought is conditioned . . . we are bound to find that the logos . . . is opposed by another logos which cancels the possibility of what has happened and what was willed. . . . [T]herefore logos, the sole vehicle of truth, is divided into contrasting logoi: hence pure truth is impossible. (141)

The tragedy of knowledge is the contrasting doubleness of the logos: for every "right" answer, another "right" answer also exists. Perhaps another way of stating this epistemological situation is by restating it in terms of foundational knowledge: there is no final standard or rule to decide the Truth of human situations. We are merely confronted by relative paths and knowledges. Nothing exists in a final, fixed, universal form. Gorgias' statement that nothing exists thus exposes "a universal horizon where every possible intellectual experience is doomed to shipwreck," as long as that intellectual experience counts on an ultimately decidable Truth (143). According to Untersteiner, then, "Gorgias felt the infinite sorrow of man, who never finds himself confronted by a

single way. . .” (142). If we agree with Gorgias that *nothing exists*, it is insofar as no single way exists in an final and fixed form.

Even if something is knowable, Gorgias continues, it cannot be directly communicated to others. According to Sextus, an early commentator on Gorgias’ trilemma, this statement does not indicate communication does not happen. We communicate all the time. Rather, the sophistic statement indicates the disjunction between language and experience: “For that by which we reveal is *logos*, but *logos* is not substances and existing things. Therefore we do not reveal existing things to our neighbors, but *logos*, which is something other than substances. . .” (Diels 46). Untersteiner calls this the “heterogeneity” of *logos* and experience. Citing Gorgias’ own explanation, Untersteiner explains:

[L]ogos . . . “does not coincide with things which are endowed with a real existence, since we present to others not the things which exist, but speech, which is other than that which is real.” . . . The doctrine of heterogeneity of perceptual and “discursive” *logos* in relation to every other experience presupposes . . . that *logos*, seen in this aspect also, is heterogeneous to those experiences which determine it. (157-158)

According to Gorgias, there is an important difference between communicating direct experience (which is impossible) and communicating experience through the mediation of language and speech (which is possible, though it avoids the direct communication of experience). Language has a mediating function, but that mediated communication always has a secondary function. What is “known,” then, can only be mediatedly communicated to others in a secondary way.

Eric Charles White reads Gorgias as making a statement about *action*: this tragic epistemology does not paralyze rhetorical action, but instead grounds it in the specificity of embodied, material, and situated contexts. In Gorgias’ theory, says White, “the persuasive force of a speech does not derive from its correspondence to a preexistent

reality or truth. Truth is relative to the speaker and the immediate context. . . . Or to put it another way, there is no meaning outside of a specific context of rhetorical persuasion” (14-15). If Gorgias is correct to situate epistemology perpetually within contingent contexts, then our analysis a text’s general argument (and argumentative strategies) appears to overlook the actual scene of rhetorical action. That is, the force of a given rhetoric, including its power to make meaning and persuade others, depends upon the immediate context in which the rhetoric is enacted. The *general ideas* of an argumentative text cannot give us insight into its operation within *specific contexts*.

CONDUCTING RHETORICS, PARTICIPATORY READINGS

In many ways, composition has made a "living" off of adopting production as the sole area of focus. Trimbur himself discloses that this overemphasis dominated even the way he and Diana George thought about the goals of their textbook, *Reading Culture*. "While we and others working in the cultural studies vein were quite aware of the danger of representing students as cultural dupes, with no defense against interpellation. . . , *the tendency nonetheless was to identify students mainly as readers, consumers, viewers, and spectators in need of training to resist the onslaught of mass culture* " ("Composition" 198; emphasis mine). Interestingly, Trimbur argues that this interpretation-model, which focuses on production over the material circulation of text, actually reconfirms the experience and ideology of middle-class culture. Students become quite adept at giving "readings" and interpretations of signifying practices. They learn quickly how to say what something *means*, which is a skill that has best served the professional classes in their attempt to re/define the world and its shape ("Composition" 199). Learning more sophisticated ways of "reading the world" does not necessarily lead to more liberated readings, Trimbur suggests, but instead leads to better ways of reading the world *for/of/to*

others. At the same time, such an interpretation-model "also neglects the other moments of circulation of cultural forms and products" (199). An overemphasis on production ignores the circuits that such texts travels, as well as the effects that texts have.

As we see above, the problem with focusing on texts and writing at the point of production is that this approach "foreshorten[s] the delivery system, the circuits of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption through which writing circulates as it takes on cultural value and *worldly force*" ("Composition" 194; emphasis mine). Rather than emphasizing decoding (a focus on the production/consumption of meaning) or encoding, Trimbur is much more interested in a particular model that explores "how cultural products pass through a range of meanings and uses as they are taken up at various points in the social formation" ("Composition" 196). A real material approach to composition, he suggests, is able to move into a wider range than (mere) production. He asks us to shift our focus away from individual, static, privileged sites of "meaning" in favor of the cultural routes that allow a text to move from one site to another.

Bruce Horner makes a similar argument in *Terms of Work for Composition*, where he argues (citing Trimbur) that the interpretive-model often works its way into our own writing pedagogies, and "can elide attention to [the] material social location [of student writing]" (64). All too often, student writing tends to be conceptualized in terms of singular points of production: the essay, the response to a text, and even the "process" of writing (which gives the *appearance* of a kind of circulation without giving much thought to the actual circuitry in which the classroom itself brings together and allows for). This kind of pedagogy ignores the material conditions of circulation that allow for such student writing to come into being. Horner writes, "[W]e have to look not just at the student's writing practice but at the conditions of that practice. . . . This means, too, that we cannot isolate features of a student's text as praiseworthy in and of themselves, but

have to understand them as work, that is, as *working* with those conditions” (65). A pedagogy that focuses on particular points of production is not merely one that emphasizes “product over process.” Yet, “process” pedagogies fail to consider writing’s circulation as often as strict “product” pedagogies tend to do. The problem with process, writes Horner, is that “production is imagined to be followed by commodification, distribution, and consumption. . . . This strategy neglects the ways in which the modes of distribution and consumption enter into the very processes and conditions of writing’s production, from the ‘start’” (211). Even in a classroom that emphasizes movement—a kind of circulation of writing—from draft to draft, the material conditions that bring this classroom together continue to remain hidden.

That rhetorical analyses are so easily exchanged (whether in acceptable or unacceptable ways) may indeed suggest that we are not coming to terms with rhetorical force as context-dependent. Can we read, as Trimbur asks, the circuits of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption through which writing circulates as it takes on cultural value and worldly force? Rather than proposing a different kind of analysis for reading the force of circulation, however, rhetorical theorists can productively turn to another strategy for reading: one that demands participation from the reading-body. Consider the reading strategy suggested in urban theorist Helen Liggett’s discussion of Nestor Garcia Canclini and his writing about Mexican monuments. Canclini sets the stage for readers by describing a statue of Emiliano Zapata standing in the middle of a city, brimming with a complexity of competing histories. Zapata’s statue materializes the signifiers of revolution and Mexican identity, among other historical significations. Yet the statue sits in the middle of the city of Cuernavaca, Canclini observes, with all of the daily bustle and changes that flicker in and out of the city’s flows. There are marked differences between reading the monument’s symbolism and reading the monument-in-

the-city. As Liggett explains, “[T]he [Mexican] monuments convey different meanings when portrayed in the everyday surroundings, in relation to daily events” (33). That is, apart from reading the points of meaning production to meaning reception, a different reading of Zapata’s statue is made possible when expanded to include the advertisements and billboards (those *other* monuments of daily life) that surround it. To read the monument in its environment—its ecology—is to read the effects of “joint tenancy” (to borrow Liggett’s phrasing) in urban spaces.

Reading monuments-in-the-city returns us to Grossberg’s theoretical practice of taking events literally, “in the facticity of their singular existence, rather than as texts to be interpreted” (*We Gotta Get Out* 49). Instead of interpreting the meaning of Zapata’s monument as a “text” that demands hermeneutic decoding, Liggett explains that Canclini opts for a reading of effects. Apart from critique, analysis, or practices of oppositional stances, Canclini chooses to *describe* the effects and linkings of this specific articulation: Zapata monument, advertisements, urban movement and traffic, modern buildings—all at the entrance of a city. Of course, reading in this way does not yield up the same kinds of (interpretive) analyses we saw above insofar as Canclini is not working in the generic. “Garcia Canclini is not making claims to substantive generalizability,” explains Liggett, “His work is testimony to the existence of life in particular cities” (35). Canclini takes the city—*this* city, *this* space—in the facticity of its singular existence, rather than as texts to be interpreted. In other words, he tracks the specific links within ecologies, as opposed to analyzing the (para)whole monument according to general (or generic) vocabularies.

Rhetorical operation in the social field involves more than either meaning production or the mechanical workings of a given text. To play off Trimbur’s words, rhetorical reading poses a question of circulation: “[H]ow to imagine [rhetoric] as more than just the moment of production when meaning gets made. How can we see [rhetoric]

as it circulates through linked moments of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption?” Canclini suggests that Zapata’s statue can also be read in the context of its material ecology, which prevents an equivalent interpretation that belies the statue’s actual circulation in the world. Indeed, circulation is always specific: the ecologies of production, distribution, consumption, and linkages are thoroughly embedded (and embodied) in historical, temporal, spatialized, and affective channels. Although rhetorical analysis methodologies might indeed draw out unique elements of texts and situations, the analytic vocabularies flatten out the context of rhetoric as an ongoing process.

Insofar as we talk about the spread of rhetorics as happening through endless encounters and loose proximities (as we did in the previous chapter), we are shifting the focus of reading to *in-action*—a reading of rhetorical operation, regardless of what meanings and significations get attached. But rather than thinking of this reading as an avoidance of meaning, we can instead think of it as an opening for theorizing the operative forces that enable meanings to travel. Anthropologist Kathleen Stewart argues that our attempts to read the world only in terms of structure, the symbolic, and discursivity somehow fail to capture the density and intensities of everyday life. They fail to capture what Stewart calls “the space on the side of the road,” which “emerges in the imagination when ‘things happen’ to interrupt the expected and the naturalized, and people find themselves surrounded by a place and caught in a haunting doubled epistemology of being in the midst of things and impacted by them and yet making something of things” (1996 4). Stewart’s approach to a reading of culture eschews the symbols and codes of a particular social scene, preferring instead to follow another cultural “mediation.” She explains that hers is an effort to

track a cultural “system” that is “located,” if anywhere, in the nervous, shifting, hard-to-follow trajectories of desire and in-filled with all the *confusion* and *aggravation* of desire itself. . . . [This cultural system] oscillates wildly between

its dreams of order and its prolific excesses, . . . [and] it drifts in the flux of desire and condenses under its weight and force. (1996 17).

Stewart does not seek to “get to the bottom” of the social by decoding its deep meanings or ideological structures. Rather, she looks to the desire-driven forces that produce, distribute, exchange, consume, and link everyday processes.

Stewart’s doubled epistemology parallels the differences Canclini finds possible in reading Zapata’s statue. Our focus can bring into sight either the “being-impacted-while-in-the-midst-of-things” *or* the “making something” of those things. The Zapata monument surrounded by urban life is indeed “in the midst of things,” impacted by everyday encounters of the city: the noise, the signs that rival Zapata’s image for attention, the activities of protest and celebration that take place in close proximity to the monument. The focus upon being-impacted is another way of taking culture’s events literally, in Grossberg’s terms; tracking such being-impacted takes events “in the facticity of their singular existence, rather than as texts to be interpreted.” Consequently, Grossberg, Canclini, and Stewart point us toward the possibility of reading rhetoric’s actual operation, circulation, and distribution within a social field.

Matters of circulation and distribution are important insofar as rhetorics are ecological in nature; they are not created all at once, and neither do they get experienced in the same ways by all bodies. Consider Canclini’s monument once again. Zapata’s significations may indeed be interpreted largely in unified, even if multiply voiced, terms. Yet a visitor’s experience of Zapata’s statue (her “being-impacted”) will be markedly different from a local urban population for whom the statue has faded into the fabric of everyday life. These two experiences—even while relating to the same “text”—are not exchangeable, not equivalent. They call for a departure from “a good general idea” that

analysis provides, calling instead for a reading strategy of constantly circulating ecologies and their constituent processes.

As Grossberg, Canclini, and Stewart hint, a strategy for such a reading will be neither inductive nor deductive. It will not draw upon a general vocabulary. Instead, borrowing from Greg Ulmer, a different kind of reading strategy might follow a *conductive* logic. As Ulmer describes through a series of puns and imagery, the *grounds* of conductive logics are necessarily different from analytical thinking. In conduction, the grounds become “a conducting connection between an electric circuit or equipment and the earth or some other conducting body. Reasoning by conduction involves, then, the flow of energy through a circuit” (63). In the case of reading rhetorics, the reader herself in a conducting body, existing as she does in a rhetorical ecology. Rather than working at a distance from the “text” being analyzed, a conductive reader actually finds herself as a connecting point between the (rhetorical) circuitry and the earth (or everyday life). She is engaging in what Liggett calls a “participatory reading.” According to Ulmer, conductive reasoning creates “a new definition of truth as ‘a relationship of conduction between disparate fields of information,’ as illustrated here in the conduction between the vocabulary of electricity and that of logic” (63). The method of “conducting” disparate fields of information exposes possibilities for reading rhetorical ecologies that are comprised of distributed events and encounters. As we have seen in previous chapters, public rhetorics are made up of different channels, both discursive and affective. While these rhetorics hang together in a kind of loose totality, we cannot necessarily read them according to analytical logics. In other words, they do not “go together” in rational or generic patterns. Faced with a field of distributed events, therefore, our rhetorical readings might find new possibilities in conductive logic.

Conduction and participatory reading are closer to the act of *sampling* than to rhetorical analysis. In hip-hop's version of sampling, new musical interpretation is generated through the juxtaposition of (sound) fragments. Sampling various channels and circuits of a rhetoric does not erase a concern with meaning, therefore, but instead allows us to "conduct" these channels and circuits in their connection to everyday life. Ulmer argues that the practice of theoretical-sampling suggests a different approach to "meaning" and the semiotic approach: "the Sine as an alternative to the sign" (14). Sampling is another way of putting "disparate fields of information" into a relation with one another. When we are faced with the agglomeration of rhetorical processes, a strategic way of reading this relation becomes all the more important. At the same time, Ulmer reminds us that this is a process that "supplements without replacing analytical reason" (x). In other words, this participatory reading is an augmentation of rhetorical analysis, bringing other dimensions of rhetoric into focus.

CONDUCTING THE EASTSIDE: A PARTICIPATORY READING

We Remember You, Ese!
in pink cadillac
cruisin' 6th. St.
East of the Freeway
on the "wrong side" of the wall
calling forth that morpheus
muse in hues of blues
 up
 'n'
 down
alleyways
beyond Chief Bar
--"Bass in Yo' Face," Raul R. Salinas

As an illustration of this participatory reading of rhetoric's operation, I turn to one of the complicated rhetorics surrounding east Austin. One articulation that has come to be

strongly associated and circulated within Austin city rhetorics is what we might call a *(there goes the) neighborhood discourse*: Austin's eastside is the "bad" part of town. This rhetoric is embedded, implicit, and affectively spread through the kinds of distributed ecologies I discussed in the previous chapter. No signs announce this designation. No civic pronouncements dub east neighborhoods as dirty, crime ridden, or dangerous. This rhetoric works its way into the ordinary speech of many Austinites, whether or not they are working *for* or *against* such a description. Reading the rhetorical ecologies of the eastside already trouble the generic analytical methods found in some rhetorical pedagogies, since we cannot rely on the orienting elements of exigence, rhetor, audience, or even an identifiable central discourse. But, if we do not have a particular *starting point* of analysis in the form of a given discourse, then our analytical vocabularies become circulatory, driven by proximities of encounters. To engage this rhetorical context, we will have to begin in-the-midst-of-things and their specific impacts. We begin to conduct a reading by putting together the disparate fields of information.

Grounding the eastside rhetoric with my own reading body, I first encountered this particular ecology late one summer many years ago. I sat in an apartment hunter's office, where he had spread open a large map in order to show me the neighborhoods where affordable housing could be found. "Of course," he said, "you don't want to live east of I-35." He pointed to the highway on the map, and then to the neighborhoods running east of the thin line representing the massive freeway. "It's just not a very nice place to live." The phrase rang in my head immediately: *east of I-35*. It was such a concrete marker to observe. I would later hear the same kind of warning many other times throughout my life in Austin. Even after I rented a house on the eastside, friends would take comfort in knowing that I was not living "too far east."

Though for me it remained a marker of embedded racism in the city's discourse,

the thin line on the map eventually faded into the background of my everyday life in Austin. A few years later, however, the thin line reemerged in my own attention with the events surrounding Sophia King's death. The name Sophia King might not have otherwise become so familiar within local discourses if the events of June 11, 2002 had been different at the Rosewood Courts housing projects in east Austin. On that day, 23-year old King faced several officers from the Austin Police Department after creating a disturbance in the neighborhood. According to official reports, officer John Coffey shot King after she refused to drop a knife that she was wielding. The debates surrounding the death of this young African-American woman—a woman whose years were marked with abuse, mental illness, forced institutionalization, and jail sentences—became a source of controversy throughout the city. Calls for police oversight and civic dialogues on racism grew louder in the months and years that followed.



Austin Police Department photo, Nov. 26, 2001. King was arrested for assault following her release from Austin State Hospital.

Fig. 3.3. Sophia King's image

But it was not only the news stories that circulated throughout the city. Sophia King's life and death became an image-event that literally gave the eastside a face for those of us who rarely crossed the thin line of "too far east." *The Austin Chronicle* published one of the most thorough journalistic investigations into King's death and short life. The images accompanying the story alternate between sparse flashes of the

Rosewood housing projects and images of King herself. Reading the caption to one of King's images accompanying the *Chronicle* story, we discover that it is a police photo taken almost a year and a half before the shooting. It is a mug shot, circulating (as so many mug shots do) in the ecology of public records, police actions, and news media. Local media published other kinds of images to help tell the tragic story of Sophia King. Relying heavily on stark pictures of bare housing projects, much of the media coverage told a story beyond Sophia's case. Many of the stories were accompanied by images of the empty apartment building where Sophia was killed. Images of local residents were almost nowhere to be seen in the pictures. Moreover, in the few images of residents, the bodies seemed to be wearied. Photographed from a distance, the residents' bodies were swallowed by the larger structure of Rosewood Courts.



Fig. 3.4. Images of the Rosewood Courts projects in local newspaper accounts of King's death.

East Austin's rhetorical circulation is thus a complexity of discourses, intensities, and the experience of encounter. The kinds of images circulating around Sophia King's death might appear to reflect a simple construction of east Austin as undesirable. After all, the images help to ratify those discourses that imagine "too far east" as a dangerous, impoverished, and hopeless place. During the Texas summer heat of 2002, images of *violence, race, poverty, and east Austin* seemed to melt together in a sticky metonymy wherever Sophia King's story erupted. Indeed, the metonymy almost seemed to be powered by the ghostly images of "too far east" reproduced in local media. It was an imag(in)ed landscape of the thin line. The pictures of housing projects and police mug shots bolster this ideology through the camera's ability to seem like a faithful witness.

While the images do indeed have this effect, however, they also operate within structures of feeling that do not collapse neatly into the discourses they accompany. "Images are always on the run from attempts to reterritorialize them," writes Liggett. "The image space is continually being constructed by a number of forces" (128). This does not mean that we are free to make anything we want out of the images, in a kind of free will counter-ideology. Rather, as Brian Massumi says, the image is multileveled: there is an index to qualified meaning *and* the image's intense duration. Indeed, the images surrounding Sophia King's case involve a strength and duration that attach to the eastside's discourse in a mutually shaping act. Images like those above not only help to construct the east Austin rhetorics through ideological meaning, but also through a feeling of intensity that makes such meanings last, giving them operational force. These images both create and are created by the kinds of thinking-feeling that, as Raymond Williams says, "do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures" on everyday life (132). Consequently, the power of

photographs surrounding Sophia King's case lies in their ability to create (and endorse) discursive meanings, as well as to invest the rhetorics with a degree of force.

We might further explore this complexity by adding another sample from the eastside's sounds. In what seems like a world away from the horrors of Sophia King's tragic shooting exists another kind of King: the Texas Eastside Kings, a blues band comprised of older African-American musicians who have played for many years in small Austin venues. Many of the members of the Eastside Kings have a long history of playing as house bands and backup musicians for such blues greats as B.B. King and T-Bone Walker. However, as their name reflects, these players are not only blues *kings*, they are also firmly rooted in the *eastside*. According to their label's short biographies of the band, each member can trace his musical life back to the blues scenes—and larger life—of east Austin. Eastside King Willie Sampson's biographical note boasts that Willie first played blues “at the age of 15, when he sat in with Willie Bell at the I.L. Club on East 11th Street in Austin” (Dialtone). Likewise, James Kuykendall's “played the jump blues all night long with Lee & the Capris, one of the early Soul/Blues bands from Austin that kept the eastside hop'n for 9 years in the 60's” (Dialtone). Almost without parallel, the Texas Eastside Kings are rooted in Austin's African-American blues scenes.

It is an odd fact, then, that while the Eastside King's members have strong ties to east Austin's musical past, the band no longer plays in eastside venues. The group's lived practices within Austin's local ecologies reveal a complicated spatial disjunction. With a few exceptions, the Eastside Kings play the majority of their gigs in popular downtown bars where the stage is shared by (mostly white) bands whose music ranges from punk rock to pop. Fans of blues music in Austin can see the Kings play in the central Austin entertainment district heavily frequented by college students and young professionals. This spatial detail emerges as a curiosity given the band's signification with/in the

“eastside.” There is a heavy irony in suggestions like one critic’s review of the Eastside King’s album, which concludes by encouraging readers to “[g]et across the interstate and check 'em out” (Renshaw). The suggestion turns into an unintended joke. After all, you do not have to cross the interstate—that thin line of I-35—in order to check out the Eastside Kings. For Austin audiences, the Eastside Kings have performatively re/located outside east Austin. The experience of the Kings creates a strange new synthesis: *eastside-sans-eastside*.

While the Texas Eastside Kings’s spatialization may seem to be a small detail, one local music historian has taken the spatial movements of eastside blues quite seriously. In the early 1990s, Harold McMillan helped to create the Austin Blues Family Tree Project, a documentary collective that sought to “create, as well as preserve, documentation about the lives and work of African American blues/jazz/gospel musicians in Austin” (McMillan). As the project’s statement explains:

In Austin's Jim Crow past, the social segregation that relegated most African Americans to East Austin neighborhoods also spawned a community with strong cultural institutions, two colleges, commerce and a lively nightlife. In its heyday, the 11th-12th Street Corridor was indeed the home of Austin's most lively music scene. With desegregation, also came the gradual disintegration of the cultural core of Black East Austin, hence the obliteration of the East Side music scene. Unfortunately many of Austin's pioneering blues and jazz artists never found sufficient work or acknowledgement once the music scene moved west of Interstate Highway 35 (the Tracks). And, because the legacy of this creative community was rarely documented in the popular press or by scholars, histories of Austin-the Live Music Capital of the World-seldom acknowledge Austin's true community of jazz and blues pioneers. The Austin Blues Family Tree Project seeks to address this scarcity of documentation, to increase awareness and to celebrate East Austin's African American musical roots. (McMillan)

McMillian’s Family Tree Project takes on the multiple tasks of digitizing live performances from east Austin’s blues players, collecting photographs, and creating documentaries about the eastside’s musical roots. As the statement reflects, however, much of east Austin’s musical past is either erased physically (due to closed

establishments and clubs) or discursively (due to a public memory Austin's musical history that usually begins with white musicians). The Family Tree Project seeks to trouble these erasures, if only a bit, through a reconnection of Austin's musical (past)life with its racial and spatial dimensions. That is, one goal of the project is to confront the deracialization (and, as McMillian's quip about "the Tracks" reflects, the despatialization) of Austin's musical memory. The fact that the Eastside Kings rarely play in the eastside speaks to an erasure that has palpable pressure points.

The two Kings from the eastside return us to that thin strip of highway, beyond whose lines lie a space "too far east" that is comprised of a complicated meshwork of encounters, events, and movements. Putting these "disparate fields of information together" exposes a complication that might not have otherwise yielded itself in the course of analysis. The eastside's spatial-racial channels are complicated and, at times, far from coherent when placed beside one another. While the rhetoric of the eastside as an undesirable part of the city can slyly present itself as a unified discourse, even if it is a unified discourse comprised through multiple voices, a more critical reading of public rhetorics gives the lie to this seeming unity. Disparate fields of information, effects, and material practices agglomerate to become public rhetorics. In other words, what pulls these distributed channels together is a certain "structure of feeling," or public mood tied to a particular temporal-historical space. Williams argues that structures of feeling are "social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations" and "a specific structure of particular linkages, particular emphases and suppressions and, in what are often its most recognizable forms, particular deep starting-points and conclusions" (133-134). The social experiences of the eastside are in "solution," which means that such disparate channels (like the Sophia King story, media images of east Austin, and the spatial experience of the Eastside Kings) begin to hang together in a kind

of affective “logic.” As a result, the eastside’s structure of feeling—in its emphases, suppressions, and linkages—forms a very particular way of thinking about the eastside. Incoherence becomes *the* structure of feeling that re/solves the eastside in public discourses.

To further draw out this solution through conductive logic, we might continue to “sample” our way through east Austin’s rhetoric. Consider the following: one Eastside Kings album cover features Sam’s BBQ, a legendary blues-and-ribs joint located on East 12th street, only a few blocks away from the Rosewood Courts projects where Sophia King was shot. This area of Austin, known as the 11th and 12th Street Corridor, straddles the Eastside Kings and Sophia King’s final home. Also straddling this corridor is the Eleven East Project, which is a multi-pronged plan by the Austin Revitalization Authority (ARA) to revive the area around the 11th and 12th Street Corridor. In addition to restoring homes, developing office space to attract business, and creating loft space from deteriorating buildings, the Eleven East Project has also sponsored artistic projects designed to revitalize the eastside neighborhoods. According to the ARA’s mission statement, this private, nonprofit cooperative has launched its ambitious plans under the heading of three main goals: respect, revitalization, and restoration. Together, these three goals help to focus the ARA on “working to restore the cultural and economic viability of our neighborhoods” (ARA). Indeed, the mission of revitalization weaves throughout the ARA’s business and community development plans.

Since the ARA’s earliest days of planning, changes within the 11th and 12th Street Corridor have attracted a great deal of attention and praise from Austin residents and local media. In 2004, the revitalization efforts appeared to be emerging into physical realities. The abundant praise drew heavily from the language of *revitalization*, as if the eastside had been resurrected from the dead. One *Austin American Statesman* article,

titled “Renaissance on East 11th Street,” is representative of the media rhetoric surrounding the eastside’s renewal:

The street was once the bustling hub of Austin's African American community before it gave way to abandoned buildings, empty lots and crack bazaars in the 1980s. Now, after years of talk and plans, the area is ready for its coming-out party. Reality has hit the ground in the form of two stately buildings that the Austin Revitalization Authority hopes will anchor East 11th's new beginning and spark a wave of public and private investment. (Schwartz)

Rhetorics of death and rebirth dominated news reports of the Eleven East project. Perhaps nowhere was this rhetoric more striking than in a story on the ARA found in the University of Texas’ student newspaper, *The Daily Texan*. In a 2004 story titled “‘Eleventh East' receives cultural makeover near U. Texas,” student reporter Jessica Lauren Hollett called upon a rhetoric of magic in order to praise the Corridor’s transformation. “For one East Austin street, fairy tales do come true,” Hollett writes. “A few years ago, the cultural, racial and musical utopia of East 11th Street was almost lost to neglect, but due to recent development efforts funded by the Austin Revitalization Authority, it seems that the neighborhood may someday return to its glory days” (Hollett). Hollett goes on to praise the “cultural makeover” within the corridor, a magical transformation that claims to change one place into another through a new set of conditions.

Alchemy happens. Transformation is magic. At least, this is the message underlying much of the media coverage surrounding east Austin’s renewal. Local Austin media have even identified a transformation in that thin line that formerly caused so much troubled discourse. Shifting discourses have begun to erase the area east of I-35 as necessarily “east Austin.” “Yes,” declared one editorial from the *Austin Chronicle*

“East Austin” was appropriate back in the day when far fewer neighborhoods in Austin were so-called. When people said ‘Let's meet at Shorty's (then a local bar) in East Austin, " everyone knew its location. But growth has expanded East

Austin as far north as U.S. 183 and south to Ben White Boulevard. (“East Austin”)

East Austin disappears like smoke. Indeed, erasing the power of the thin highway strip means becoming respatialized by fixing the burden of Sophia King (that includes all the “Sophia Kings” of east Austin) firmly in the old eastside, and the Eastside Kings within the fluid border of Austin’s east-west end space. As ARA founder Byron Marshall explains, ““We hope to fix up this whole area and maybe spur further development that will make the East End a safe, fun, popular place to be again” (quoted in Hollett). For the ARA, the transformation of east Austin depends quite heavily upon the *vita* of revitalization: life begets life. At the same time, issues of circulation are never too far from the surface. The fact that Marshall refers to the “East End” is no small detail insofar as revitalization efforts attempt to mute the thin strip’s power.

The notion of a “coming-out party” for the 11th and 12th Street Corridor acts as a strange relay to the two Kings’ histories above. However, the relays of east Austin stop short of telling a coherent story about this space. Given this strange incoherency, then, why should we conduct a sampled reading into the rhetoric(s) surrounding the eastside? As Raymond Williams suggests, we can understand culture in its operation and ongoing processes of development. Culture is structured through what Williams terms “structures of feeling,” which are “social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations. . .” (131). In Williams’ terms, we find “solutions” of social experiences happening through the engagement of various channels—including circulating images, discourses, and material practices. While these solutions do not result in a coherent or unified rhetorical discourse, they form linkages that hang together as a set of relations. Solutions are the articulations (to borrow Grossberg’s term) that we can “live with” in public discourse. They are the linkages between this practice to that effect,

this experience to those politics, and so forth. A given rhetorical solution, therefore, is the constantly evolving set of relations that are often taken together. Williams suggests that reading these channels and linkages can turn up operational insights into a historical sensibility, such as the early Victorian rhetoric linking exposure and poverty with personal deviation and moral failure. However, the literary channels of Dickens and other writers added a force of *dispersal* to these links, specifying “exposure and isolation as *general* conditions, and poverty, debt, and illegitimacy as its connecting instances” (134). Historical changes to this Victorian structure of feeling helped “the intensity of experienced fear and shame [to become] dispersed and generalized” (134). Arguably, Williams offers us a theory for understanding rhetoric’s uneven and distributed public development. The sets of relations are not experientially universal, nor do they necessarily emerge in discourse alone.

In many ways, the eastside rhetoric is a familiar one in most cities. We certainly cannot disentangle the power of that thin line of “too far east” from the institutionalized racism and classism within the United States. Yet, as important as it is to profess, this reading does not expose the ways that these rhetorics develop unevenly through ecologies that are not distributed (or experienced) the same way by all bodies. Through a participatory reading of the various distributions and linkages of a particular structure, we find that there are many different channels that contribute to the loose totality we might call an “east Austin rhetoric.” In Williams’ terms, there are many social experiences that have helped to create this particular solution; the eastside rhetoric’s processes of development involve complicated emphases, suppressions, and linkages about spatialization. A conductive logic of reading disparate fields of (ecological) information to be read side by side without forcing them into a coherent synthesis or unified into a narrative meaning. Indeed, participatory reading makes it more difficult to flatten out our

readings of rhetoric by ignoring matters of circulation. Such readings prevent rhetorics from, in Trimbur's words, "tak[ing] on an equivalent look that belies their actual circulation in the world." The generic analyses—or the analyses that were "generally equivalent" from situation to situation—tend to elide the uneven rhetorical developments and circulations within rhetorical ecologies. Participatory reading emphasizes the ways that a rhetoric grows over time, in various channels, along uneven paths. In the case of our "eastside rhetoric," we find an ecology that has many sources of development and sustention.

Not only does conductive reading expose the operational aspects of rhetoric, however, it also engages the analyst's body-in-public as a conducting point in the rhetorical ecologies themselves, making it more difficult for the rhetorical-reader to distance herself from the rhetorical ecology in a generic analysis. By beginning with the analyst's own body-in-public, we highlight what Stewart calls a doubled epistemology: not just "making something of things," but theorizing the being-impacted by them. Unlike the analyses we saw from the paper mills, this kind of participatory, conductive reading is not exchangeable. Instead, it begins in the assumption that rhetoric as a lived process is read differently when conducted through a body's own encounters. In my highly autobiographical and embodied reading, for example, I traced the affective links of east Austin that reflect my own situated position within the ecology. Rather than a coherent analysis that begins with an identifiable rhetor, audience, claim, and rhetorical strategies, a participatory reading begins with an emergent sampled map. My associational reading does not seek a hermeneutical or analytic interpretation of this rhetoric, nor does it seek to replace such analysis. Its aim is elsewhere. Reading via affective, participatory, and associational linkages seeks to expose the experiences that

circulate in a given rhetoric. It re/turns us to the question of circulation's constitutive force in public.

Of course, this is not to say that there are no coherent narratives within public rhetorics. There are indeed, just as we have identified "east Austin as undesirable" as a rather coherent narrative in Austin's city discourses. But it is crucial not to overlook the *processes* through which such coherency is formed. Moreover, the act of conducting, or sampling, participatory readings also serves to underscore an important aspect of public rhetorics for students: we do not live in a "blessed world" of coherence. This statement directly challenges the ideology of "obviousness" and "common sense." One of the most dangerous aspects of discourses like those above is that they often become self-authenticated. That is, the feeling of coherency itself serves to prove the truth of rhetorics in official discourse. In other words, because a rhetoric (feels like it) makes sense, the discourse slips into a kind of transparency of obviousness. The world is thus blessed in its line of coherent narration.⁴ But there is value in breaking up this ideological tyranny of coherence. One way of accomplishing this critical challenge is in a reading strategy that actively resists false senses of rhetorical coherency. Rather than approaching public rhetorics in a generic mode of analysis, therefore, we can revise our readings through a participatory method.

Notes

¹ The preference for logical association can be seen in most writing textbooks today. For example, in a section from *Writing the World* called “Tips for Writing a Successful Rhetorical Analysis,” the authors tell students, “Concentrate not on content but on the argument’s organization and strategies” (529).

² The exception, of course, is in those informal “gripe sessions” that composition instructors often engage in among themselves. Complaints about poor analyses and shallow student observations can be heard up and down the hallways (and up and down the listservs) of professional institutions throughout the country. Most of my own professional conversations about the products of student analyses have usually begun with a beleaguered colleague, paper in hand, uttering the words, “You *have* to look at what one of my students wrote.”

³ These were the complaints when the issue of paper mills arose during a July 2004 discussion on WPA-L, a listserv for writing program administrators. See the archived discussion at <<http://lists.asu.edu/archives/wpa-l.html>>.

⁴ Berlin points out in “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class” that one of Goran Therborn’s descriptions of ideology is that which pronounces what exists, what is good, and what is possible. Ideology is thus strengthened by a mutually reinforcing operation between coherence and the “good” sense that comes from coherence.

Chapter Four: Affect, Discourse, Knowledge

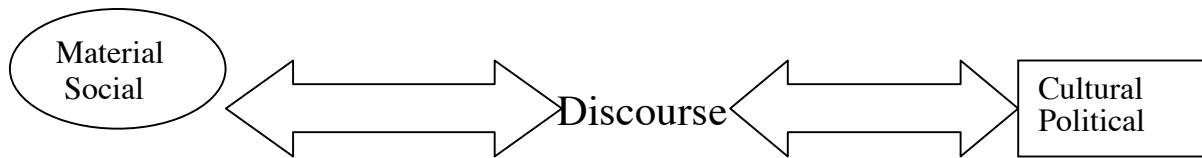
In the previous three chapters, I attempted to (re)imagine rhetoric's operation by exploring culture as structured in an affective field. I did this by proposing an ecological model of public rhetoric, as well as the possibilities for "reading" rhetorics in their operative circulation. Although the emphasis in these chapters was on rhetorics and their processes in-action, we have never ceased to discuss rhetoric in terms of discourse. Indeed, while we have been exploring various affective dimensions of rhetoric and rhetorical theory, I want to be careful not to create a dichotomy between *discourse* and *affect*. As I have argued in previous chapters, affect is not an "other" to discourse anymore than it is an "other" of rhetoric. Rather, in order to discuss rhetoric more fully, we may draw upon the image of mutuality between affect and discursivity. Without collapsing the two, we can begin to see that rhetoric's operations involve a constant mutuality between affect and language insofar as we are never properly outside either dimension.

In terms of rhetoric and composition studies, the roles of discourse and language become central questions. This is because many theories hold that language is the key to understanding how knowledge is created rhetorically. Some scholars in rhetoric and composition have suggested that discursivity is inseparable from every aspect of our work, insofar as the question of language and knowledge cannot be separated. For example, in "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," James Berlin posits an epistemic, dialectical, and discursive interaction of the social, political, and material. "Knowledge is never found in any one of these but can only be posited as a product of the dialectic in which all three come together," he writes ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 488). For him, these elements come together in language: "This does not mean that the three do not

exist apart from language: they do. This does mean that we cannot talk and write about them—indeed, we cannot know them—apart from language” (488). We can only talk about the dialectical interaction of the social, political, and material *in* and *as* discourse. In other words, we only know the world through discourse, making language the only way of knowing the “truth.” In Berlin’s theory, this firmly implants the realm of epistemology in the discursive. “Language . . . is one of the material and social conditions involved in producing a culture,” writes Berlin. “This means that in studying rhetoric—the ways discourse is generated—we are studying the ways in which knowledge comes into existence” (“Rhetoric and Ideology” 488-489). Berlin finds an inextricable braiding of discourse, epistemic knowledge, and the rhetorical construction of our world(s) and everyday life.

Berlin’s scholarship builds a model of rhetoric as epistemic discourse, which imagines discourse/language to be a mode of meaningful mediation between material and cultural spheres. As he writes in “Revisionary History,” discourse connects and transforms the point of interaction between these spheres. “On the one hand are the material and social conditions of society,” he writes, “on the other are the political and cultural. It is rhetoric—discourse—that mediates between the two . . .” (52). The dialogic/dialectical nature of rhetoric is laid out here quite explicitly as the “two hands” of material and cultural conditions, bridged together by discourse. Consequently, Berlin affirms that rhetoric (as discourse) has a mediating function in the social field. This description marks what Berlin calls “epistemic rhetoric,” in which there “is never a division between experience and language. . . . All experiences, even the scientific and logical, are grounded in language, and language determines their content and structure” (*Rhetoric and Reality* 16). In other words, the epistemic function of language follows from the fact that knowledge is actively shaped in language. “All truths arise out of

dialectic,” explains Berlin, “out of the interaction of individuals within discourse communities” (*Rhetoric and Reality* 17). At the risk of oversimplifying Berlin’s careful scholarship, we might illustrate his theory of discursive mediation as something like this:



While this illustration necessarily reduces the complex details of Berlin’s social-epistemic rhetoric, it suggests how dialectical mediation operates in his theory. The “knowledge” that is generated both *in* and *by* material and cultural conditions takes place in the realm of discourse. At the same time, our various discourses act upon those spheres, forming a dialectical interaction. This illustration also reflects the discursively mediated interplay between material/social conditions and cultural/political conditions of society. Each element in this schema interacts with the others, yet they never interact in *meaningful* ways apart from discourse.

The mediating function of language is perhaps the most important thing to take away from this sketch of rhetoric’s epistemic discourse. While Berlin assures us that we cannot ignore the material concerns of everyday life, he also posits that language is always stepping into the mix. He writes:

[M]aterial experiences are mediated through signifying practices. Only through language do we know and act upon the conditions of our experience. Ways of living and dying are finally negotiated through discourse, the cultural codes that are part of our historical conditions. . . . Thus the subject who experiences and the material and social conditions experienced are discursively constituted in historically specific terms. (“Poststructuralism” 21)

As we can see in this articulation of language’s mediatory function, Berlin understands rhetoric as ideological. Rhetoric, or discourse, shapes how we know and what we know.

In a 1988 keynote address to the Rhetoric Society of America, Berlin continues to explore epistemology's implication within ideology. Epistemic rhetoric, he remarks, "is no longer regarded as the mediator of competing social and political positions. Instead, rhetoric is seen as itself an ideological construct, endorsing in its very structure particular economic, social, and political arrangements. . . ." ("Rhetoric Programs" 12). As Berlin writes elsewhere, "Ideology here is foregrounded and problematized in a way that situates rhetoric within ideology, rather than ideology within rhetoric. In other words, instead of rhetoric acting as the transcendental recorder or arbiter of competing ideological claims, rhetoric is regarded as always already ideological" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 477). Looking to Louis Althusser and Gören Therborn's notion of ideology, Berlin tells us that "ideology is transmitted through language practices. . . . Conceived from the perspective of rhetoric, ideology . . . is thus inscribed in language practices, entering all features of our experience" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 478-479). The construction of our world(s) is discursive, which is also to say ideological and rhetorical. If this relation between rhetoric and ideology seems messy, according to Berlin, that's because it is: "Ideology . . . becomes closely imbricated with rhetoric, the two inseparably overlapped . . ." ("Poststructuralism" 23). To stretch Berlin a bit, then, this theory suggests that rhetoric, ideology, and discourse are somewhat equivalent. Putting aside the messiness of this relation for just a moment, however, we might understand the larger implication of Berlin's argument to be about the rhetoricity of world: Language mediates. Period.

The question of rhetoric as/and epistemic discourse is central to a field like composition studies, according to Berlin, insofar as our practices are not simply *about* rhetoric, but are themselves rhetorically mediated epistemologies. In his influential 1982 article "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," Berlin refutes the

notion that various composition theories clash based on what elements of the communication triangle—writer, language, reality, audience—they emphasize. Rather, theoretical differences occur in the *way* these elements are conceived. “In the case of distinct pedagogical approaches,” explains Berlin, “these four elements are likewise defined and related so as to describe a different composing process, which is to say a different world with different rules about what can be known, how it can be known, and how it can be communicated” (“Contemporary” 9-10). In other words, the differences in pedagogies are epistemic. Berlin goes on to identify four major composition pedagogies as distinguished by their epistemic conceptualizations of writer, reality, audience, and language: Neo-Aristotelians, Current-Traditionalists, Expressionists, and New Rhetoricians. He explains that such rigid divisions are important, since the “epistemic complex [of each pedagogy] makes for specific directives about invention, arrangement, and style (or prewriting, writing, and rewriting)” (“Contemporary” 10). Likewise, he argues that acknowledging these epistemic differences is important because “in teaching writing, we are tacitly teaching a version of reality and the students’ place and mode of operation in it” (“Contemporary” 10). Berlin expands upon these various pedagogies based on their epistemic conceptions of *truth*.

This emphasis on the dialectical operation of rhetoric/discourse gestures toward what Joseph Petraglia refers to as one of rhetoric and composition's (arguably dominate) paradigms of knowledge and meaning: social-constructionism. He explains, "a social constructionist argues that knowledge is created, maintained, and altered through an individual's interaction with and within his or her 'discourse community'" (314). According to Petraglia, composition's social constructionist adheres to a "theory of knowledge [that] heralds an overdue acknowledgement of a rheto-centric universe. . . ." (316). For the social constructionist, reality is rhetorical. Consequently, rhetoric as

dialectical mediation plays out in various social-epistemic rhetorics. Drawing on the works of Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish, for example, Patricia Bizzell argues that we always operate within one or more discourse communities. Writers do not write apart from the culture, expectations, prohibitions, history, and narratives of a specific community. "Writing is always already writing for some purpose that can only be understood in its community context," she explains ("Cognition" 89). Moreover, according to Bizzell, such a discourse community actually shapes and creates what counts as knowledge through its interpretive function. That is, "[P]articipating in the academic discourse community entails a world view. . . ." ("Discourse" 228). In order to become part of the community, a budding practitioner must come to understand the interpretive grids and the language shared by others in that same community.

Different discourse communities play out a given rhetorical dialectic in very different way. Our various interpretive grids depend upon what community we find ourselves acting/speaking/writing within, which means the world itself can show up differently. How we interpret material-cultural conditions in our discourses will vary. Likewise, how we use discourse to shape material-cultural spheres will also be quite different. Academic discursive communities are a prime example, according to Bizzell. Not only do participants in academic discourse share common language-using practices, but they tend to interpret information according to particularized grids of meaning. Academic discourse legitimates certain knowledge (and ways of knowing) over others. This is why students sometimes have such difficulty writing in an academic context: they are not familiar with the discourse of the university. They may not know how *this* (academic) *world* comes into being, nor do they know how to bring it into existence through their discourses.

Yet, as Bizzell points out, to say that students do not know academic discourse does not mean that they are not acting within discourse. Students are never *not* part of some kind of discursive community. They are, as we all are, part of "a group of people who share certain language-using practices" ("Discourse" 222). As the dialectical model reflects, we are always in (a) discourse. In other words, we are never in a material, social, cultural, or political sphere that is not already shaped by discourse (and, at the same time, that is not already shaping our discourse). As Kenneth Bruffee suggests, also drawing from Rorty and Fish, what we *know* (about the world or about certain "facts") is a function of the context within which the speaker-writer acts. Bruffee's classic essay "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" ties the rhetorical construction of our world(s) to discourse, arguing that knowledge is constructed through the *conversations* of particular communities and speaker-writers. The "meaningfulness" of writing, for example, depends upon the context in which it appears. "It is within [a] set of conventions and values that my readers will evaluate [my] essay, both in terms of its quality and in terms of whether or not it makes sense," explains Bruffee (642-643). Parallel this with Berlin's assertion of composition pedagogy's epistemological nature, where "[t]o teach writing is to argue for a version of reality . . . ," he writes ("Contemporary" 10). If discourse always mediates (material and cultural conditions of) the world, then there is no discourse that does not already shape what we call reality, truth, and knowledge. A claim to know something about the world is a claim to a certain discourse.

DISCOURSE'S BRAIDING: THE MUTUALITY OF AFFECT AND DISCOURSE

Up to this point, I have attempted to sketch a vision of how composition studies has centralized the importance of discourse in certain parts of our scholarship. Because

discourse is inseparable from epistemology, moreover, the importance of composition's work is (re)affirmed in powerful ways. For these reasons, discussions of affect can be seen as threatening our work in composition insofar as they do are not confined safely within the realm of discursivity. One expression of such threat recently emerged in WPA-L, a listserv for writing program administrators, where a conversation about composition and affect turned into a critique of what was seen as impractical theory-talk. In response to a question about how to assess writing's affective dimensions, Fred Kemp argued that theories of affect have a limited application in the real work of classrooms:

We have tended in our field to conceptually hone in here and there with ever more theoretical sophistication. Meanwhile, the mechanism for delivery of these sophisticated pedagogies to places where teachers actually encounter students seldom goes anywhere. . . . [O]ur ideas are like elephants trying to squeeze into dog houses. As we've gotten academically cuter with our pedagogical ideas, we've shunted ourselves further from both the writing program administrators who can understand and appreciate them, and even further from the possibility of their finding their way into the actual lesson plans in the tens of thousands of classrooms that teach writing in America. My feeling is that we need to think much more seriously about the huge management problems of getting something realistic (if theoretically flawed) to work across America, rather than the typically literaturists' job of one-ups-manshipping the best current ideas of the guy next to you. (Kemp)

Comments like Kemp's wedge an imaginary binary into the field's conversations, wrongly pitting "practical" teaching concerns against "theoretically extravagant" discussion of affect. Even certain listserv members who found the discussions of affect important still professed a frustration at the lack of classroom, or practice-based, focus. In the words of one list member: "I followed the recent discussion of affect closely, but I'd hoped for more information about practice. . . . I have plenty of theoretical underpinning at this point, but have found little that addresses actual practice" (Sailor). Comments like these reflect a fundamental misunderstanding about the relationship being re/imagined within scholarship on affect.

Take the perspective offered by urban studies scholar Helen Liggett, who argues that epistemology is generated at least in part through affective dimensions. Our knowledge of the city's public places, for instance, is not only constructed in language, but also in feelings that become attached to those places. As Liggett puts it: "Learning how to feel about urban space is to make urban space" (24). That is, affective states—the prick of anxiety, low intensities of boredom, the relaxation of musculature, a rush of energy—puts us in a mood and attitude in relation to places. These attitudinal lenses thus become another mediating apparatus about how we come to "know" the world around us. Although Liggett is working outside the realm of textual studies, we might draw some parallels to Kenneth Burke's writing on attitude. In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke explains that our "names" for situations involve a particular way of acting within those situations: "In naming [situations], we form our characters, since the names embody attitudes; and implicit in the attitudes there are the cues of behavior" (4). Our attitudes operate through what Burke calls "frames of acceptance," which are systems through which we gauge a situation and adopt a role in relation to it (5). Frames are "particular way[s] of drawing the lines" through which we see the world (92). Learning how to "see" a situation--historical or local--is a matter of attitude insofar as it is a mutually shaping process of naming and feeling. For example, if I operate through a comic frame, which pictures people as fundamentally *mistaken* and *blind*, I am less likely to see the worlds in terms of evil. To borrow Liggett's words, learning how to feel about the world is to make the world (through attitude). Another way of paraphrase both Burke and Liggett is in the paradoxical statement that epistemic discourse is not *only* discursive.

Setting aside the question of whether Berlin's discursive epistemic model of rhetoric is accurate, therefore, we find that rhetoric's epistemic or knowledge-building functions are not outside of an affective realm. Insofar as we "know" through discourse,

or insofar as what we call truth is a convention of a community's general agreement, we might also agree that discourse nevertheless becomes operable through the attitudinal lens of feeling. Not only do discourses give us languages (always firmly rooted in an ideology, as Berlin points out) with which to understand the world, but we also have an attitude toward those discourses. Or, to play off Liggett's line, we might say that learning how to feel (about) discourse is to make discourse. Consequently, any model of epistemic rhetoric would benefit from expanding its own terms of mediation beyond discourse. Since Berlin's scholarship remains one of the most influential sources of composition scholarship about epistemic rhetoric, I would like to offer an augmentation of his dialectical model I sketched at the beginning of this chapter. This model repeatedly emphasizes discourse as the key term of mediation in knowledge-production. While I do not challenge the mediating role of discourse in epistemic rhetoric, I suggest (re)emphasizing the inseparability and mutuality between discursive and affective dimensions within the process of knowledge-making.

Of course, the affective dimension of epistemology has already been theorized by a variety of scholars. One recent complication to Berlin's model of epistemic discourse can be found in the work of Lynn Worsham, who has argued that ideology itself operates through structures of feeling. In "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion," Worsham explores "the tight braid of affect and judgment, socially and historically constructed and bodily lived, through which the symbolic order takes hold of and binds the individual, in complex and contradictory ways, to the social order and its structure of meanings" (216). Worsham suggests that culture's "dominant pedagogy" creates and enforces the structures of meaning to which individuals must adapt in order to become recognizable within the culture. As Worsham explains, "Dominant pedagogy is a structure that produces individuals and groups who are recognized as such because they

have internalized the legitimate point of view” (221). Yet this process of schooling—the social construction of emotion—is not a matter of imposing certain meanings. It is not merely a matter of inheriting and repeating the cultural tropes that metonymically (and dramatically) stand for our most socialized emotional dimensions: *Boys don’t cry. Love is romantic. Being patriotic means supporting the government.* We do not “obtain” ideology through repetition of discourses. Rather, Worsham suggests that real cultural schooling occurs at the level of sensual feeling:

Its primary work is to organize an emotional world, to inculcate patterns of feeling that support the legitimacy of dominant interests. . . . Pedagogy binds each individual to the social world through a complex and often contradictory affective life that remains, for the most part, just beyond the horizon of semantic availability. . . . (223)

Worsham thus suggests that while discourses comprising our public rhetorics do indeed mediate the world, those ideological (or rhetorical) meanings are powerful because we are bound to them affectively. So tight is this braid between affect and judgment, Worsham adds, that our critical attempts to counter certain oppressive logics with more “liberatory” discourses is doomed to fall wide of the mark. The dominant pedagogy that does the work of binding together certain discourses and feeling “holds most of us so deeply and intimately and yet differently within its logic that our affective lives are largely immune to the legislative efforts of social critique and to the legislative gains and progressive social movements” (216). The act of “changing minds” becomes quite complicated in Worsham’s schema, for we are no longer simply operating at the level of discourse and ideology. Neither is affect merely a construction of discourse or ideology. There is an affective complex at work: like a kind of discourse-glue, the symbolic order binds the individual to the social order’s structures of meaning. Learning to feel is learning to make, to know, to be.

Because we are bound to discourses and ideology through affect, Worsham argues that feeling may be a key political term for rhetorical theorists. She explains, “[I]deologies of gender, race, class, and sexuality are properly understood, at least in part, as ideologies of emotion. . .” (“Coming to Terms”). Take an ideological formation like racism or misogyny, for example. These are not *first* cognitive thoughts or personal feelings that then emerge from the “personal” realm into the social. According to Worsham, racism and misogyny point to “an affective relation between self and other than runs much deeper than a cognitive understanding. . .” (“Coming to Terms” 105). Consequently, Worsham argues that ideology’s power is not primarily in terms of its contents, but in the operation of relation itself. “What I am suggesting, then, is that the primary work of ideology is more fundamental than the imposition of a dominant framework of meanings. Its work is to organize an emotional world. . .” (“Coming to Terms” 106). Instead of identifying affect as issuing from the personal, then, we must flip the process: the so-called “personal” realm of emotion and feeling issues from the affective field that structures the social.

Worsham is not the first to suggest such an affective braid among discourse, ideologies, and epistemologies. The notion of being bound affectively to discourse was perhaps first formally theorized by Gorgias in his “Encomium of Helen.” This much-cited sophistic discourse attempts to explicitly reprove the detractors of Helen by defending her blamelessness in the events of the Trojan War. Was it Helen’s selfishness, wickedness, or other personal motivations that led her to run away with Paris? No, says Gorgias, it was none of those reasons; Helen was forced into her actions. Interestingly enough, however, Gorgias does not rely upon the rape/abduction argument, which would free Helen from blame in most people’s eyes. Instead of making her the victim of a rape, Gorgias advances several possibilities to exonerate Helen: “For either by will of Fate and

decision of the gods and vote of Necessity did she do what she did, or by force reduced, or by words seduced, or by love possessed” (51). If either of the first two possibilities are the case, argues Gorgias, then we clearly cannot hold Helen accountable. No mortal can withstand the gods, just as a rape victim cannot be expected to overcome her rapist.

Gorgias dispenses with these first two possibilities rather quickly and in short summation. If she had been raped, then the case is closed. “It is just therefore to pity her but to hate him” (52). Similarly, we cannot blame Helen if she left her husband through will of the gods. Though both of these possibilities has the best chance of actually convincing the audience against Helen’s blameworthiness, it seems clear that Gorgias does not wish to make either of these two possibilities the focus of his speech. Instead, he spends the majority of his encomium on the third possibility: that Helen acted as she did because she was seduced by words. Gorgias declares:

Speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body effects the divinest works: it can stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity. . . . I both deem and define all poetry as speech with meter. Fearful shuddering and tearful pity and grievous longing come upon its hearers and . . . through the agency of words, the soul is wont to experience a suffering of its own. (52)

Gorgias thus proposes that speech has a certain kind of power over both mind and body of its hearers. There is a fantastic element to Gorgias’ discourse on language. He seems to grant speech, or *logos*, an almost embodied agency, inducing and overwhelming the bodies that fall under its spell. As Gorgias goes on to say:

The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, . . . and some drug bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion. (53)

If Helen had succumbed to the power of *logos*, then Gorgias suggests that we must still presume the affair was an instance of abduction. She was *taken* by speech.

As fantastic as this may seem at first glance, we must carefully take care to read what Gorgias has to say about the actual act of persuasion and argument. It is not that *logos* itself is an evil (or sweet) bogeyman. Rather, he argues that human rhetors themselves cannot engage *logos* as anything but a drug that works on the body of the listener. “All who have and do persuade people of things do so by molding a false argument,” says Gorgias:

For if all men on all subjects had <both> memory of things past and <awareness> of things present and foreknowledge of the future, speech would not be similarly similar, since as things are now it is not easy for them to recall the past nor to consider the present nor to predict the future. So that on most subjects most men take opinion as counselor to their soul (52)

Persuasion is made complex through the “tragedy of knowledge,” to borrow Mario Untersteiner's phrase. In language we might use today, Gorgias identifies here and elsewhere (most forcefully in the discourse *On Not-Being or On Nature*) the impossibility of ever finding an ultimate Truth underlying circumstance, situatedness, and conflict. Because we will never know everything—because total transparency into a situation is not possible—Gorgias argues that wo/men must fall back upon “opinion,” or the movement of poetry's peculiar kind of falsity. As Untersteiner articulates Gorgias' epistemology:

[I]n spite of the power of logos to leap to the height of the universal under the spur of the artistic experience . . . , this universal is not won except by means of the irrational capacity of logos which nevertheless works with an inexorable logical sequency able to impose either this or that philosophical opinion whether juridicial or dialectical: it is always a question of a universal which is split by the irrational concurrence of certain special circumstances” (141).

It is not that *logos* lies or violently attack us, but rather that *logos* cannot do anything but ruse—it must “lie” insofar as “telling the truth” is not fully possible. The *logos* is bound up in contingency that cannot be fully grasped by those language users/hearers caught up

in its operation. The only “bogyman,” therefore, is the human inability to get at a fixed, universal truth that is untinged by the messy situatedness of the contingent moment.

The fact that Helen was “taken” or “seduced” by language is not in itself that strange, then. In Gorgias’ epistemology, language never makes the world transparent for us to know fully. We must either yield to the language itself (without expecting to see the Big Truth that is hidden “behind” it) or attempt to resist its rhythms. In this sense, we are all *taken* by language. Gorgias uses this common experience as yet another reason to exonerate Helen. Can we really blame someone who, “against her will, might have come under the influence of speech, just as if ravished by the force of the mighty?” (52). It happens to all of us. Consequently, we might conclude that the act of persuasion is not a matter of transmitting truths or rational information in order to change minds. More subtly, however, we might also say that the act of rhetorical persuasion does not work primarily through epistemology, even when the argument is a rational, logical construction. We cannot ever get ourselves out of the situation of historical, social, and personal contingency. We instead yield to rational arguments in (at least partly) non-rational ways: giving into the sound of the argument, as opposed to its soundness (as Truth). “[T]ruth,” writes Untersteiner

cannot—not even in virtue of one of its irrefutable proofs—be incarnated in logos. For when we seek to grasp the contents of thought by which thought is conditioned—that is, what has happened and what was willed—we are bound to find that the logos . . . is opposed by another logos [T]herefore logos, the sole vehicle of truth, is divided into contrasting logoi: hence pure truth is impossible. (141)

That is, one rhetor’s truth is met by another truth that makes equally strong claims for validity (in fact, there are *endless* others). More than one side makes a claim to know the Truth: the right argument. If nobody can claim to have the “god’s eye view” on truth, then persuasion will be something other than “proving” the truth-value of claims. This

something other is precisely what Gorgias suggests as the seductive, abductive power of *logos*. We do not prove Truth through language; we seduce (and are seduced) by truth-claims in all their shuddering, rhythmic, poetic force.

Though Gorgias' "Encomium" is written as a defense of Helen, the abduction of Helen is every wo/man's story. It is also an exploration of rhetoric's operation in language. Gorgias maintains that all beings are seduced by the *logos* insofar as none of us have insight into a final knowledge. As Untersteiner tells us in his careful reading of Gorgias, the sophist was not working in praise of ruse or deception. Rather, he spoke out of a recognition that we are all in a tragic relation to knowledge: "The ambivalence and the consequent contradictory nature of the *logoi*, which can be overcome only by means of an irrational intellectual act such as deception and persuasion, create the tragedy of human existence when the intellectual drama is represented as the drama of human beings" (142). Contrary to what his detractors have alleged, Gorgias' sophistic rhetoric does not advance deception at the expense of truth. He mourns our situation as a kind of violence—one that we cannot ever hope to overcome. In order to *act* and *move* others to action, however, we can do nothing but give into the shuddering power of language.

In this sophistic take on persuasion, we see a loss of faith in language's power to operate through proof and reason. The *logos* is a force that moves us. We might call this the force of rhetoric's *intensity*: a power that is sensual, non-qualified in meaning, and co-present (though not co-terminous) with language. That is, whenever the rhetor "gets the message across," there is an intensity within the language-act that moves the listener. It was not merely the rational, logical, or cognitive aspects of Paris' speech that moved Helen. She yielded to the *intensity* of that speech: the intensity that made her stutter, shudder, and sway. Finding herself "under the influence of rhetorical intensity," it was the speech's rhythms, poetry, and sensations that persuaded her to go away. Therefore,

Gorgias advances a view of rhetoric and knowledge that does not operate primarily through signifying or semantic meaning.

Ernesto Grassi also explored the mutuality between affect and discourse in the rhetorical production of knowledge. In his essay “Rhetoric and Philosophy,” Grassi begins by showing how rational/philosophical speech has long been held as an ultimate, primary, or originary kind of discourse. Insofar as rational discourse is concerned with principles of knowledge and their demonstration, this speech is held to be non-derivative. As Grassi explains:

We claim we know something when we are able to prove it. To prove [*apo-deiknumi*] means to *show* something to be something, on the basis of something. To have something through which something is shown and explained definitively is the foundation of our knowledge. . . . [It] is the kind of speech which establishes the definition of a phenomenon by tracing it back to ultimate principles, or *archai*. (119)

Rational discourse thus depends upon tracing back various claims to their prior principles. Indeed, this tracing back is what we have come to call the demonstrative process of rational discourse. Consequently, this puts rhetoric into question. Where philosophy and rationality are privileged, Grassi writes, “[r]hetoric is seen only as a technical doctrine of speech” (19). That is, rhetoric is only the technique of persuading through others emotion, flowery language, and sensations to accept a position, action, etc. It is not the language of *apo-deiknumi*, or the tracing back to originary, primary principles. In fact, rhetorical persuasion does not depend on any “proof” of prior principles.

Yet the demonstration of prior principles within logical/rational discourse does not itself rest on ultimate principles. “It is clear that the first *archai* of any proof and hence of knowledge cannot be proved themselves because they cannot be the object of . . . demonstrative, logical speech; otherwise they would not be first assertions,” Grassi

argues (19). Primary principles, in other words, cannot be proven via the same process of demonstration that they ground. A first principle cannot be “proved” by showing its grounding in a prior or earlier principle. This leaves philosophical and rational speech in a bit of a bind. “[I]f the original assertions are not demonstratable,” asks Grassi, “what is the character of speech in which we express them? Obviously this type of speech cannot have a rational-theoretical character” (19). In response, Grassi argues that the first principles, or *archai*, are instead *indicative* or *allusive*, not rational. That is, the first principles cannot be proven, but they can be evoked, revealed, and conjured by a non-rational sense. As Grassi continues, “[W]e are forced to admit that the primal clarity of the principles is not rational and recognize that the corresponding language in its indicative structure has an ‘evangelic’ character, in the original Greek sense of this word, i.e., ‘noticing’” (20). If the most originary of principles cannot be proven (for if it could, it would no longer be an originary principle), then they can only be disclosed in a kind of revelation.

Stretching Grassi just a bit, we might also say that *proof* ultimately depends upon *faith*. This faith is not (just) a belief in the rational process of demonstration and argumentation, but rather a primary, originary faith in the first principle that makes the resulting reasoned argument possible. Grassi here takes issue with a view that considers the sensual, emotive, and non-rational as nothing more than the “helpmeets” of rationality:

[O]ver the centuries, . . . the thesis was again and again developed that images and rhetoric were to be appreciated primarily . . . as aids to ‘alleviate’ the ‘severity’ and ‘dryness’ of rational language. To resort to images and metaphors, to use the full set of implements proper to rhetoric and artistic language, in this sense, merely serves to make it ‘easier’ to absorb rational truth. (26)

However, Grassi continues, there is no possibility of rational language whatsoever if it is not for the ability of rhetoric to *evoke* the first principle which cannot be proven. There is

no possibility of rational language without the ability of rhetoric to create adherence to that principle. Grassi suggests that rhetoric generates the scene of belief—faith—needed in order to proceed with rational argument. “The *techne* of rhetoric, as the art of persuasion, of forming belief, structures the emotive framework which creates the tension within which words . . . acquire their passionate significance. It creates a tension through which the audience is literally ‘sucked into’ the framework designed by the author,” writes Grassi (26). It is not that “the emotive framework” helps discourse to operate better. Rather, it is the sense at the “bottom” that needs only to be felt, not proven. The very “beginning” of rhetorical discourse is taken on faith.

What Grassi identifies, then, is not a secondary emotional appeal that aids rational discourse, like a supporting beam of a house. Re/turning to Gorgias, we might say that Grassi identifies the primary seduction of *logos* that must happen if rhetoric is ever to work. Before persuasion can get enough traction to “prove” or “convince,” the listener must be open(ed) up to the force of rhetoric. She must be open(ed) to the *possibility* of persuasion. We might call this opening a kind of rhetorical seduction that has no basis in rationality, cognition, or reason. This opening is a moment of sheer affect; it is a moment that works through the intensities of rhythms, sensations, movement, and forces. Importantly, as Grassi points out, this intensity is not secondary (like pathos, or like emotion in service of a rational argument), but a primary seduction/intensification.

Both Gorgias and Grassi add an interesting extension to Berlin’s notion of how epistemic discourse comes to generate and perpetuate “knowledge” in culture. Berlin argues that “in studying rhetoric—the ways discourse is generated—we are studying the ways in which knowledge comes into existence.” For Berlin, language is the mode of mediating knowledge and epistemology (and, of course, ideology) within culture. Therefore, according to Berlin, we are bound to the world *through* discourse. As we saw

from one of his more striking quotes at the beginning of this chapter, Berlin effectively argued that language is the key term of cultural mediation: “Ways of living and dying are finally negotiated through discourse, the cultural codes that are part of our historical conditions. . . . Thus the subject who experiences and the material and social conditions experienced are discursively constituted in historically specific terms” (“Postructuralism” 21). However, the theoretical threads from Worsham, Grassi, and Gorgias trouble the key term “discourse” just a bit. From different starting points, all three theorists suggest an affective dimension of discourse that does not ultimately collapse indistinctively into discourse. Gorgias and Grassi both propose a kind of “faith” or performative basis to rhetorics that pose as epistemic discourses. Discourse, in these sophistic versions, requires us to play along with it. Meanwhile, Worsham emphasizes the affective bind between discourse, ideology, and epistemology; that is, a body invests in ideology through felt dimensions. These perspectives suggest that while Berlin may be right to argue that knowledge comes into existence through discourse, he underemphasizes the affective operations through which discourse gains its effectiveness.

Here is our challenge: can we augment Berlin’s model with greater attention to affect while, at the same time, preserving his insight into discursive mediation? Must we necessarily rid ourselves of Berlin’s insight that “[a]ll truths arise out of dialectic, out of the interaction of individuals within discourse communities”? The response is productively complex. Emphasizing the affective dimension of epistemology not only does not require us to “choose” affect over discourse, but it actually strengthens our theoretical explanations of how discourse operates in the production of knowledge. What follows is not an alternative to the model I illustrated earlier, where discourse sat directly between *material* and *culture*. Rather, I offer three additional terms that are invisible affective outliers: embodiment, investment, and sociality. These are three ways that we

learn to feel (about) discourse in order to make discursive knowledge; they extend the operational explanation of Burke's frames of acceptance, which he claims are not passive, but instead "fix attitudes that prepare for combat. They draw the lines of battle. . ." (*Attitudes* 20). That is, because our attitudinal frames name our world in such a way that makes us feel friendly to the "good" terms and unfriendly toward the "bad," our frames of acceptance are an epistemic bridging of affect and discourse.

EMBODIMENT

Worsham tells us that there is a "tight braid of affect and judgment, socially and historically constructed and bodily lived, through which the symbolic order takes hold and binds the individual . . . to the social order. . ." ("Going Postal" 216). The fact that Worsham specifically points to the embodiment of discourse is significant. Whereas Berlin's theory draws our attention to the world's discursivity, he also subjects the body to an all-encompassing mediation of discourse. However, the body is hard to subject. Ways of living and dying arguably are not only negotiated in discourse, but are lived and experienced in the twitches, jolts, and strange murmurs of the body. Our challenge is to separate discourse from the bodily experiences of that discourse. While many rhetorical theories reflect serious and important arguments about knowledge-making and epistemology, they also tend to collapse the separation (as well as the mutuality) between discourse and body. In Berlin's schema, for instance, corporality and materiality generate knowledge through the articulation of meaning in language. Moreover, because this language is historically situated (that is, because we are interpellated into a given language), what we make of body and world is highly rhetorical. Berlin explains that materiality (and, he might add more specifically, the body) does not exist apart from language, but rather that materiality's *meaningfulness* exists only in language.

However, as anyone with a body can tell you, corporality does not always submit to discourse in the way Berlin describes. For example, the body in pain exposes a problem with naming discourse as the key term of knowledge-mediation. Being sick even as I write these words, I can testify to the destruction of meaning—the interruption of discourse—that falls out from a sick body. Indeed, the body can block the kind of “negotiations of discourse” in ways of living and dying. “When the punishing thrashes of pain come down on you,” writes Avital Ronell, “you are at a loss for words, the fiction of agency collapses. . .” (191). The body in pain refuses to be negotiated in discourse. Or, as Ronell puts it: “Ever elsewhere when it comes to cognitive scanners, the body evades the regimes of knowledge that would claim to grasp, sectionize, or conceptualize it” (187). Although we may come to articulate, describe, and make sense out of that pain later, the bodily pains themselves escape articulation in discourse.

The body in pain teaches that we must imagine a much more mutual relationship between discourse and embodiment. Rather than seeing affect as a product of discourse, therefore, we begin to understand the two as shaping each other. This mutuality troubles the kind of corporeal textualization Berlin suggests, where ways of living are, at bottom, negotiated only in language. While the material world may indeed be articulated discursively, it also exerts its own force on discourse. As Worsham argues, our bodies, emotions, and energies invest in those very discursive articulations. Discourse, in other words, is backed by a non-discursive force; it is structured in feeling: “[W]hat moves discourse, what moves through meaning is untranslatable, unrepresentable, irrecoverable within discourse” (Worsham “Writing” 89). Theories of discourse’s role in knowledge-creation are richer when they consider these active roles of embodiment.

In her analysis of conservative Australian ultra-rightist politician Pauline Hanson, for example, Anna Gibbs turns to the notion of affect for an explanation of Hanson's

popularity. It is not (merely) that Hanson persuaded an entire line of voters to support her arch-conservative policies, argues Gibbs, but rather that Hanson's affective body entered into particular kinds of affective relations with other bodies. Gibbs remarks, "Bodies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire: affect leaps from one body to another" ("Contagious"). With this in mind, Gibbs is especially interested in Hanson's face and voice (as they are caught on screen) to find what she calls "the affective resonance" of visceral response between bodies" ("Contagious"). With her pale skin, green eyes, and red hair, Hanson herself was a disruption from the ordinary drabness of political faces. She was *striking*. Her voice was also affectively contagious. Wobbly and full of emotional texture, Hanson's voice had the ability to affect hearers in powerful ways. In Gibbs' astute reading:

Hanson's voice in the broadcast coverage of the last federal election often conveyed acute distress, as if she was about to burst into tears, and the communicability of this affect in turn set in motion a number of affective sequences in those who listened to it. The distress of the other, if distress itself particularly distresses the observer, often produces an impulse to put an immediate stop to it, as when a baby cries. . . . ("Contagious")

Trembling and emotional, Hanson herself appeared less than articulate or self-assured. This performance was not at all harmful to her broad conservative and moderate support, as Gibbs points out. For her inarticulacy "not only communicated the immediate affect of distress, but formed part of a more general attitude . . . of some one who has 'had enough', and this attitude, if not the detail of all of her actual ideas, evoked a ready sympathy in many people" ("Contagious"). In other words, it was not political, ideological content that *necessarily* won support for Hanson. It was not so much of what she said, but the sensation of intensification she was able to cultivate for some members of her audience. In addition to these indexical lines, there was a certain kind of visceral feedback being

fed by an interloop of bodies. There was a mutuality between Hanson and the bodies of her supporters.

As suggested by this example, we might begin to rethink the (rhetorical) body as an affective, visceral body: the body infolds sensation prior to all mediation of thought and meaning. "Visceral sensibility immediately registers excitations gathered by the five 'exteroceptive' senses even before they are fully processed by the brain," writes Brian Massumi (*Parables* 60). In a given situation, the body *knows* prior to our cognitive awareness. Massumi explains:

As you cross a busy noonday street, your stomach turns somersaults before you consciously hear and identify the sound of screeching brakes that careens toward you. . . . The immediacy of visceral perception is so radical that it can be said without exaggeration to precede the exteroceptive sense perception. . . . [V]iscerality subtracts quality as such from excitation. It registers *intensity*. (*Parables* 60-61).

In other words, the affective body acts within relations that are cognitively filtered out from our recognized awarenesses. Whereas we often only recognize the linear, qualified index of meanings, the body is aware of the event's doubleness. "Viscerality, though no less of the flesh, is a rupture in the stimulus-response paths, a leap in place into a space outside action-reaction circuits," explains Massumi. "Viscerality is the perception of suspense" (61). Before we can cognitively, consciously register an indexical meaning along a semantic narrative, our body has already encountered the suspension and interruption of the event. These frameworks enact a slight reworking of Berlin's notion of discursivity. Rather than knowing the world (including the body, in its ways of living and dying) only through the mediation of discourse, we find that discourse is granted its force of power by the feelings that accompany it. Rhetorical discourse does not merely mediate feeling, but also depends upon it. Moreover, as Worsham's argument suggests, this reworking is an important point in understanding what gives rhetorics the force of power.

In the examples of Austin rhetorics I discussed in previous chapters, it is difficult to ignore the presence of bodies involved within those scenes. The fact that certain discourses (like the fear-ridden discourses of my neighborhood's graffiti or the widely professed undesirability of the eastside) involve palpable feelings of anger and fear is important. Nedra Reynolds's *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference* explores this connection in terms of the different kind of "maps" we use on a regular basis. Keeping in mind that we have physical-landscape maps, as well as maps of the cultural-landscape, Reynolds wants to know "the kind of information that maps can and cannot give us" (82). The maps she seeks are our socially constructed maps generated through lived experiences; they are embodied meetings of the social and spatial. As such, they both inform our identities as inhabitants/strangers and how these identities construct the contours of our cultural landscapes. As an example, Reynolds discusses the experiences of several students in the Leeds School of Geography, where she was a researcher and a participant-observer in fieldwork. After questioning several undergraduates about their perceptions of various neighborhoods around Leeds, she found that their identities "as students" prevented them from venturing into certain places because they felt that their identities made them unwelcome. For other students, it was the stories about or the material appearances of the neighborhoods themselves that made them seem "undesirable" to the students. Pointing to the socially sedimented nature of such "mappings," Reynolds calls for a "geographic rhetoric" that investigates the layers of meaning—sedimented in feelings—that a place carries for people.

The information maps cannot give us also relate to the ways in which bodily sensations, experiences, and feelings mutually interact with materiality and discourse. In his reading of this mutuality, Richard Marback takes Detroit's "Monument to Joe Louis" as a 24-foot bronze *topos*. The monument, which looms large in the heart of downtown

Detroit, is a suspended bronze forearm and fist—a representation of the long arm and powerful fist of Louis himself. Yet the fist—dark skinned and clenched tight—cannot help but evoke other kinds associations. It is violent, strong, powerful. Consequently, Marback reads this fist against Detroit’s conflicted history, as well as its current racially-charged civic scene. Indeed, he says, the monument “graphically materializes the contemporary urban conditions within which rhetorical agency is constructed and contested. . . . [It] memorializes the struggles of African-Americans and the continuing crisis of racism. . . .” (78). There are many different claims spatially inscribed in the terrain of Detroit: many kinds of conflicting voices, histories, experiences, fears, and hopes. “The fist thrust horizontally in midair . . . materializes conditions of contemporary struggles for meaning and value in city life. . . . ‘Monument to Joe Louis’ crystallizes and reflects the last thirty years of Detroit” Marback explains (85). In Marback’s version of a material rhetoric, the city’s various claims and histories are *material-ized* in embodied ways. The Louis monument is more than a memorial to a great fighter, then, but is also “a fist inscribed with the fears of racial violence, agonized memories of racial injustice, and hopes for a democratic citizenship” (86). In short, this monument exposes the city’s contested histories and claims. Marback suggests that a city’s materiality is important insofar as it both situates its people and tells us something about their (rhetorical) situatedness. Physical and embodied elements within a city are worth our attention insofar as they are the materialization of various claims and voices that exist at various spaces throughout the city. The fist of Joe Louis, for example, *materializes* a number of contending histories, claims, and feelings about Detroit’s racial histories, as well as the violence that has marked the city in various ways.

INVESTMENT

We might casually frame the situation like this: a body *cares* for its discourses by investing them with energies and intensities, pasting them into coherent frameworks and narratives, and tuning our own emotional frequencies to the discursive resonances around us. Taking the discussion of embodiment one step further, we find that our public discourses and rhetorics are invested with what some have called “desire,” which imbue them with a force of legitimacy. While Berlin's model explores how desire is discursively and ideologically mediated, there is no account of how a body comes to actively invest in a particular discourse. However, Lawrence Grossberg has repeatedly pointed out that discourses, ideologies, and subject positions are not flat or bodiless, Grossberg argues. They are always in action. Calling out certain cultural critics, Grossberg writes, “[M]eaning[s] and ideological positions are never passively occupied. They are taken up, lived, in different ways, to different degrees, with differing investments and intensities” (*We Gotta Get Out* 45). The fact of “living the discourse”—of *feelin’ it*—offers some insight into how discourses become solidified and effective in publics. Grossberg argues that our discursive ideologies are a matter of care. We “get attached” through “the strength of investment which anchors people in particular experiences, practices, identities, meanings and pleasures. . .” (82). In other words, discourse is rendered *operative* because of the affective, libidinal, felt investments that allow it to be lived. If discourse is the mediating engine of culture, then desire is the propulsive mechanism.

Marshall Alcorn offers one of the most eloquent explorations of desire and affective investment in discourse. Using a Lacanian framework, Alcorn explains that discourses are not like whole packages “placed” within a subject (or even throughout a given public). Although discourse is ideological, its mediating function is not without its own mediation. “Real-world experience suggests that something apparently *within* a

subject mediates between discourse that seeks to change a subject's identity," writes Alcorn (17). Calling this subject-mediation a matter of "libidinal investments," Alcorn argues that subjects have adhesive attachments to discourse. Indeed, these adhesive attachments are what grant discourse so much power:

We are moved by . . . libidinal attachment and loss of libidinal attachment . . . much more than by rational arguments. What we *are* in discourse is not evenly spread across all examples of discourse. We are *in* those discourse clusters that bind our emotion. . . . [T]he rhetoric of discourse is libidinal. (26)

Alcorn thus identifies a mediating element that Berlin leaves out of his schema. Not only does discourse mediate culture and materiality, according to Alcorn, but *those* mediating discourses are themselves mediated through the libidinal attachments of a subject-body. "To be in discourse is to be in relation to multiple competing desires," Alcorn continues (88). Alcorn reformulates Grossberg's notion of anchoring within practices, meanings, and discourse. Both theorists explore how affective investment is not *opposed* to discourse, but, in fact, *binds* us to those discourses.

The concept of investment is important for discussing epistemic rhetoric since our ways of "knowing the world" may be more affective than previously theorized. This has a special implication for the critical function that rhetorics play. When a rhetoric challenges people to rethink their epistemological positions, for example, we are faced with a problem: how do minds change? If we adopted a simplistic communication model that imagined people rationally reconsidering their positions when shown stronger "evidence," then our answer to that question would lie solely in demonstrative discourse. However, Grassi and Gorgias suggest that the roots of demonstration and belief are planted in the realm of affect, which means that the act of "changing minds" does not occur solely at the level of discourse. As Worsham has pointed out, belief and cultural practices are rooted (outside their own discursive articulations) in structures of feeling:

[I]deologies of gender, race, class, and sexuality . . . provide the conditions in which a primary affective mapping of the psyche occurs. . . . Misogyny, for example, is not, first of all, a cognitive condition of individuals amenable to correction through an alteration in the content of thought or thought patterns. It is primarily a state-sanctioned disorder of affect, a learned disposition of fear and hatred that is the foundation of a pervasive attunement to the world. ("Coming" 106)

Belief and cultural practices do not result from content being somehow dumped into our cognition. If that were the case, then "changing minds" or challenging an epistemological position would simply entail a transfer (or "dump") of new information into the audience's minds. Yet, Worsham suggests that this information transfer does not begin to address the real root of epistemologies or ideologies. Meanings, beliefs, ideologies, and our attitudinal frames are not passively occupied, as Grossberg points out, but they are lived. Whether we draw from Alcorn's Lacanian vocabulary of libidinal attachments or Grossberg's language of affect, we can describe this view of epistemology as a matter of anchoring and investment. "It is the affective investment which enables [ideology] to be internalized and, consequently, naturalized," says Grossberg (*We Gotta Get Out* 83). Leaving aside the question of whether such affective investments are purely ideological, I argue that Berlin's epistemic model can be productively augmented to account for investment. Ways of knowing may be articulated in discourse, but we are anchored to those discourses through structures of feeling.

SOCIALITY

Lest this talk of investments confuse the issue, we must make clear that affective attachments are not something individuals consciously choose. In case the notion of affective investments sounds "too conscious," writes Grossberg, we should recall that it is "also the case that affect is not simply something that individuals put into it" (*We Gotta*

Get Out 83). We do not invest in discourse like people invest in stocks, deciding on the libidinal attachments we will or will not enact. Worsham argues that our investment is an effect of the dominant cultural pedagogy, which teaches our bodies to invest in certain discourses. We do not “step” into a discourse, or discourse community, without desire already at work. That is, our initiation within a discourse takes place always already within the affective field of culture

In one of the most interesting readings of how affective investments anchor us in discourses and epistemologies, Lauren Berlant explores the processes of attachment that create anchors through relationality. She calls this the act of intimacy, where “the inwardness of the intimate is met by a corresponding publicness” (*Intimacy* 1). The intimate scenes of everyday life—sex, erotics, family life, romance, injury, trauma, abuse, childhood—are more and more becoming the proper spheres of publicness and citizenship. Berlant asks us to consider the question of how intimacy creates more than a private life, but also (or, perhaps, *instead*) a sense of publicness. “How can we think about the ways attachments make people public,” she asks, “producing transpersonal identities and subjectivities, when those attachments come from within spaces as varied as those of domestic intimacy, state policy, and mass-mediated experiences of intensely disruptive crises?” (*Intimacy* 2-3). In other words, Berlant is interested in the various ways of *feeling attached* to/at various scenes creates the materials for a public sphere. Such normative attachments include heteronormality, marriage, the couple, monogamy, and motherhood. Yet, as Berlant points out, these designated attachments do not even begin to capture the “energy of attachment” we experience in everyday life (*Intimacy* 5). “[I]t is hard not to see lying about everywhere the detritus and amputations that come from attempts to fit into the fold; meanwhile, a lot of world-building energy atrophies” (*Intimacy* 6). Intimacy’s appropriation can create subjects—subjects who are citizens,

subjects who have appropriate sexual urges, subjects with normal relationships, etc.—but intimacy itself still appears to have “unlawful” intense remainders that are left behind. Intimacy is nothing if not the experience of a sociality, within which we operate rhetorically with others.

The relation between sociality, affect, and discourse are similarly documented by Kathleen Stewart in her book *A Space on the Side of the Road*, where she ethnographically tracks the operation of public intimacy in West Virginia mining communities. These intimacies are spread through what Stewart calls *a world got down*. Language that's "got down" is not referential, Stewart explains, but possesses a power that resides in the intensification of effects. The discourse of Appalachia often stands at odds with the discursive *aims* of those who see language as a meaningful tool. Stories told by the minors are not powerful so much by virtue of their references and meanings, she writes, but for the *sense* they generate. The stories themselves might go nowhere—they are unrelated to the subject at hand, they meander, they do not finish, they forget to reach a “point.” One woman’s story about a broken down truck sparks another story about an abandoned house by another. As Stewart writes, “[I]n stories like these the hierarchy of concept over event, or ‘idea’ (with its metaphysics of the theoretical, the internal, and the active) over ‘example’ (connoting the supplemental, the literal, the external, the passive) breaks down and is inverted. . .” (80). A world got down is not a world where "politics is lodged in self, world, and action, but in the process of styles" (85). The stories wound their listeners and are experienced in a way that is simultaneously intimate and public. The validity of truth or personal veracity is not the issue, in other words. The validity and veracity is in the feeling and the experience they create between the storytellers.

Stewart describes this inverted hierarchy in action when she recounts one particular story exchanged in a mining community. Ostensibly, the story involves two men who have a running argument about whether a copperhead bite could kill someone. After one of the men gets bitten by a copperhead, he drags himself over to the other man's house to prove he was right. Oddly enough, Stewart notes, the storyteller never bothers to mention whether or not the man died. But that was not the *point*, for this story was "just talk": "talk that rises to the surface to overwhelm the merely referential with a rush of poetic forms and *the living phantasm of a sociality*. . ." (31; emphasis mine). Stories like this generate intensities and create a "world" among its listeners and participants. But it is the sense of the story, and not a content, that creates world. Stories have effects beyond meaning effects insofar as they are able to generate and sustain this "living phantasm of a sociality." That is, the sense that is created here glues together a kind of social, or public, fiber. The sense generated by affective bodies-in-relation is experienced in a kind of *public intimacy*.

Some feminist scholars have used the language of trauma to discuss these same concepts. For instance, Ann Cvetkovich presents trauma as a breach of selfhood and as an experience that circulates in publics. In *An Archive of Feeling*, Cvetkovich argues that affective circulation can form the basis of a public. More than the phenomenon of private engagement in (the) public, she reads public culture in its affective contours. "[R]ather than a model in which privatized affective responses displace collective or political ones," she writes, "[I propose] a collapsing of these distinctions so that affective life can be seen to pervade public life" (10). Cvetkovich uses the language of trauma, an affective experience that serves to disrupt the membrane between personal and public worlds, to ask how public life is constituted in affective ways, through the kinds of obtuse sense that Barthes identifies. She presents this sense as a kind of everyday para-foundation for

culture: “I’m interested in the way trauma digs itself in at the level of the everyday, and in the incommensurability of large-scale events and the ongoing material details of experience” (20). The sexual trauma of rape, for example, spills over into the small-scale, creeping, everyday trauma of sexism that infuses cultural life in the twenty-first century. Though Cvetkovich’s own investigation focuses on such everyday trauma, however, we can stretch her conclusions to a larger scene of public life. As she explains, “[I]t is no longer useful to presume that sexuality, intimacy, affect, and other categories of experience typically assigned to the private sphere do not also pervade public life” (32). It is the field of *sociality* that renders the public and private moot.

For scholars in rhetoric and composition, thinking through sociality and intimacy might best be pursued through the lens of Kenneth Burke and his notion of “pure persuasion” in *A Rhetoric of Motives*. The designation of “persuasion” can easily conjure up the standard line of rhetoric that we have come to know so well in our theories and pedagogy. There is the scene of the rhetorical situation in which this standard sense of persuasion takes place. There is exigence, speaker, audience, discourse. There is a claim, proof, warrants, and (above all else) a series of ultimate positions and goals. Yet, as Burke tells us, there is something prior to this kind of persuasion. “Pure persuasion involves the saying of something, not for an extra-verbal advantage to be got by the saying, but because of a satisfaction intrinsic to the saying. It summons because it likes the feel of a summons. It would be nonplused if the summons were answered” (*Rhetoric of Motives* 269). Burke draws a comparison between this kind of pure persuasion and what theorists have called “phatic communication,” or the speech that performs a place-holding function rather than communicating a message. (“Hey.” “Uh hu.”) Phatic communication, Burke explains, is “talk at random, purely for the satisfaction of talking

together, the use of speech as such for the establishing of a social bond between speaker and spoken-to” (270). Similarly, pure persuasion involves a kind of phatic element.

This does not mean that pure persuasion is purposelessness. Burke sees the purpose itself as a kind of intense communion—an engagement in sociality as such. Pure persuasion is not a rhetoric of advantage or a goal-driven rhetoric. That is, it is not ever fulfilled in a teleological way. Rather, it is “fulfilled” in the course of its own performance, just as phatic talk in a conversation often keeps the possibility of communication alive.¹ In another sense, we might drop electronic phatics to friends in order to keep open the sense of communication. *Just a note to say hello*. In much the same way, Burke presents pure persuasion as a kind of originary condition that makes possible the more recognizable forms of rhetorical persuasion:

Since the ultimate form of persuasion is composed of three elements (speaker, speech, and spoken-to), as regards the act of persuasion alone you could not maintain this form except insofar as the plea remains unanswered. When the plea is answered, you have gone from persuasion to something else. Where you had previously been trying to get in, you may not have to try getting out. . . . (274)

Burke suggests that the individual scenes of rhetorical persuasion are sustained by a larger drive. If this were not the case, then a rhetorical scene would somehow “end” once the “plea” was answered. As Burke puts it: “[A] persuasion that succeeds, dies” (274). In order for an appeal to operate between bodies, there must be an open channel between them. Burke thus suggests that the phatic communion of pure persuasion “is the precondition of *all* appeal” (271). Consequently, we find something is prior to the rhetoric that works on the level of cognition and fulfillment. This something is precisely what Burke calls *pure persuasion*, which takes place at the level of desire, body, and structures of feeling that are emergent without ever taking-root. It keeps the lines open and alive for a kind of rhetoric that does take root in explicitness and conceptual discourse. Pure persuasion holds open the possibility for communication. It is precisely

what we could call rhetoric's point of emergence, on the cusp of actualization without passing into it. "It is the moment of motionlessness, when the axe has been raised to its full height and is just about to fall," says Burke. "[Or] it would be the state of intolerable indecision just before conversion to a new doctrine. Less exactly, for our purposes, it is the pause at the window, before descending into the streets" (294). The fact that we do partake in meaning-making discourses points to the lines of sociality and intimacy already in operation.

DISCOURSES IN THE (AFFECTIVE) WILD

Consider the example from chapter one of the graffiti in my neighborhood, where the discourses themselves are underscored by the kind of embodiment, investment, and sociality I discuss above. Discourses are at work in this scene, building meaning. But we should note that, paralleling the discourses, there are also processes going on, as well. Although my neighbors may indeed walk around the streets with a definitional concept of what constitutes "a neighborhood," the sudden encounter with tagging on the playground shatters something. A narrative is suspended for a moment. The body takes a jolt as it enfolds the sensation of being disrupted. Massumi reminds us that affective viscosity can be a kind of interruption of our epistemic frameworks that performs the kind of mediation work Berlin imagines. Not too long after this sensation of disruption, however, a narrative quickly casts a shadow over this feeling of interruption: *Graffiti makes our streets look like less of a neighborhood, crime is taking over our streets, we are being attacked*. Much like the students Reynolds interviews in her cultural geography research, my neighbors cited their own feelings of fear and (lack of) safety as evidence of "trouble." It is easy to see how these discourses are infused with what we might call libidinal attachment, or desire. The discourses of crime, graffiti, and deteriorating

neighborhoods are not simply spoken, circulated, and adopted. As Grossberg says, they are taken up and lived with differing investments and intensities. That is, the discourses themselves are lived through a practiced enaction of feeling. Furthermore, this inaction of feeling gives such discourses a depth of intensity, which helps to explain their force in the social field. In one sense, the discourses are cared for—even fed—through that intense investment.

Here we begin to find a kind of affective framework of discourse taking shape in the act of meaning-making. Rather than the exclusively discursive mediation that Berlin suggests, the above processes reveal a more mutual relationship among discourse, materiality, culture, and affective feeling. Without allowing for the work of affective investment, Berlin’s epistemic model of rhetoric overlooks the apparatus that makes those discourses “sticky.” Why is the discursive articulation of crime-graffiti-race so powerful? Why, when compared to the articulation of graffiti-as-art, does this discourse serve as the more common epistemic lens through which we compose the “meaning” of tagging? Arguably both discourses circulate widely in the social field; even my angry neighbors are surely familiar with the (counter)argument that graffiti is a form of art. But the crime-graffiti-race articulation becomes the lens through which most of my neighbors “see” the tagging in our local park. This is the discourse that becomes sticky; it is the discourse that my neighbors invest in affectively and intensively.

But there is another important aspect to consider to all of the public Austin rhetorics that we have examined in previous chapters. Although all the discourses possess an element of “stickiness,” we must remember (as Burke and others tell us) that we are not “unsticky” before we somehow find ourselves entering into discourses. Public intimacy already exists prior to our entry into the realm of a given (public) rhetoric. Whether we are talking about the outcries about neighborhood graffiti, the public

responses to a changing city, or the rhetorics surrounding the “bad” part of town, the expressions of fear, anger, hope, and joy seem almost prior to the discourses that these needs embody. That is, public discourses about neighborhoods give a voice to those affective needs.

The examples of Austin rhetorics bring us to a simple (yet far too overlooked) statement on rhetoric's epistemic function: the way we know about the world is embedded in a mutual relationship between discourse and affect. In proposing models of epistemic discourse, therefore, we want to avoid falling into the trap that Derrida calls "rhetoricism," which can blind us to the complexity of rhetoric's affective dimensions. Without de-emphasizing the rhetorical girding of *episteme*, Derrida argues that we must not err in the other direction:

I think that a self-conscious and trained teacher, attentive to the complexity, should at the same time underline the importance of rhetoric and the limits of rhetoric—the limits of verbality, formality, figures of speech. . . . rhetoric, as such depends on conditions that are not rhetorical. . . . They depend on certain situations: political situations, economical situations—the libidinal situation, also. (Olson "Derrida")

"Rhetoricism" is arguably the mistake that can be found in Berlin's model we saw in this chapter's opening pages. However, the error is only a matter of emphasis. We can agree with Berlin that ways of living and dying are indeed negotiated in language; we are able to articulate experiences through structures of discourse. However, these ways of articulation--as well as their power of movement and persuasion--depend on conditions that are affective.

Since we teach composition, we might (at this point) be asking how this mutuality impacts our teaching. I want to continue challenging the kind of misunderstanding between discourse and affect by sketching a pedagogical application between the theory I have discussed in the last four chapters and the daily classroom practices that I enact in

my own pedagogy. The following excursus, is thus a relay between our discussions of affect and the work that we can do in teaching writing.

Notes

ⁱ We know from the field of Conversation Analysis that phatic talk on phone conversations keeps the “communication” going, even when the messages are not explicitly articulated. Phatics allow for what we often think of as the “real communication” to continue. See Paul ten Have's *Doing Conversation Analysis: A Practical Guide*.

Postscript: Pedagogies of Intensity

The subject of affect is beginning to receive a great amount of attention in rhetoric and composition studies. While I wish to add my voice to the growing scholarship on rhetoric and composition's affective dimensions, theorists like Nedra Reynolds, T.R. Johnson, Marshall Alcorn, Geoff Sirc, Gregory Ulmer, and Kristie Fleckenstein (among many others) have already been posing a number of complex questions about the relations among writing, affect, and pedagogy. One recent collection, *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies*, explicitly tackles these issues in one of the first serious studies of the role of affect in composition. As editors Dale Jacobs and Laura Micciche explain in their introduction, the collection attempts to "re-vision the ways in which emotion intersects with disciplinary practices and theories by highlighting the relationship between affect and rhetoric" (3). Similarly, Worsham--whose work Jacobs and Micciche cite as one of the first sustained explorations of affect in composition studies--argues that composition's new interest in affect should become "a category of critical *thought* . . . [that] move[s] us into a new orbit of social and political possibility" ("Moving" 163). The recent exchange in *JAC* between Daniel Smith and Christa Albrecht-Crane answers Worsham's call by bringing the question of affect into other conversations within the field. The articles and responses between Smith and Albrecht-Crane address matters of agency, subjectivity, and civic consciousness.

However, as I mentioned in chapter four, some have launched a misguided critique against theories of affect as being "other" to practice. I explained there that when we ask what writing does, we are not forced into a choice between *either* sensation *or* meaningful practice. Indeed, writing is the proximate operation of affect and signification. In order to avoid misunderstandings about affect's relation to writing

pedagogy, therefore, we might explicitly explore how these theories relate to the practices of teaching writing. Making explicit connections between pedagogy and affect also serves to frame possible future directions of our field's research and teaching practices. I argue that our pedagogy is not only enriched by theories of affect; it is crucial to (re)incorporate affective theory into our practices if we are going to expand writing studies into a relevant position in the university and local communities (not to mention in the digital cultures of everyday life¹). In this brief postscript, I want to talk about some ways that these theories have changed my own pedagogical practices and aims. What follows is a thick description of a course that I taught while attempting to articulate the (possible and actual) roles of affect in my own teaching. This discussion is organized across four main questions: How was the course organized? What were its institutional and community contexts? What was the underlying theory informing the course's structure? How does this course illustrate the benefits of considering affect within composition pedagogy?

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the fall semester of 2004, I taught a course called Rhetoric 309L: The Writing Process. Rhetoric 309L is designed as a lower-division writing course that addresses aspects of the writing process at The University of Texas at Austin. Students who take the course are usually fulfilling a nine-hour requirement of writing-intensive coursework. My version of 309L was titled “The Writing Process: Documenting Austin.” As our syllabus described in the opening paragraph:

This is a workshop course designed for improving your prose through the writing process. The focus is on writing. We're going to define “writing” very broadly, however, rather than just focusing on the essay format. In fact, we will try to write in many kinds of genres and media, exploring how different kinds of writing

accomplish different things. Students will concentrate on one single project, a documentary, by carefully attending to matters of invention, style, and rhetorical performance. Because our class focuses on the writing process, we will want to spend a lot of time thinking about how writing involves the recursive practices of thinking, writing, revision, and learning how to get (and use) feedback from others.

Although most students came to class expecting to write three or four essays of various kinds, the first day of class subverts this expectation. Our project for the entire semester consisted of individual student documentaries about any local phenomenon, issue, place, object, idea, or event that students choose. The documentary had to be something students were able to treat and document first hand and in-depth, using primary research. The topic also had to be focused enough that students could treat it with close attention in a relatively short documentary. Although the term "documentary" conjures up the Frontline style video, these documentaries were created in various media. Depending on students' interest, topic, and rhetorical needs, they were free to choose a web-based, text-based, audio-based, or film-based project.

Our class was taught in the Computer Writing and Research Lab (CWRL) at the University of Texas. Conducting class in the CWRL classroom meant more than holding class in a room filled with computers. I took seriously the notion that my students were digital writers, or writers operating within the specific ecology of digital environments--whether those environments are professional, cultural, social, or academic. The resources made available to students in the CWRL allowed us to enlarge our scope of research and production, which underscored my claim that our notion of "the writing process" would expand its borders beyond the print-based essay format. Several resources from the CWRL make possible the creation of multi-media projects like the ones I envisioned for 309L. For instance, the CWRL runs an open computer lab available to any student enrolled in a CWRL class. The lab not only provides a space for student groups to meet

and collaborate, but there are also a number of multi-media machines that allow for digitization of analog media, film and sound editing, and other special programs for creating multi-media. The lab also owns two digital video cameras, which CWRL instructors can check out and use with their classes.

As you can imagine, documentaries and multi-media writings have the advantage of sounding remarkably interesting to students, at least in comparison to talking about essays. Yet the heart of this project, both practically and theoretically, does not lie in the flashy finished products, but in the research. Whereas research is often considered by students (and even some teachers) as a process *leading to* public production (a means to an end, so to speak), the heart of our class involved a logic of generative research that takes research *as* an aim. Our research model, however, was taken from an unusual source. Rather than assigning chapters on research from composition handbooks or textbooks, I introduced our approach to research by bringing in a piece of paper I had found one day on the street. It was a page ripped out from a spiral notebook. In colored markers, a crude (but recognizable) image of a mermaid was drawn on both sides, looking as if it had been done by a small child. Students laughed and described similar “finds” along the streets. We then took a look at an issue of *Found Magazine*, an entire publication devoted to collecting and reprinting people’s various finds just like my mermaid picture. We read aloud some of the finds, like the scrap of paper that simply said: “Happy fathers day to you, even though you told me I can’t cook and the pie I made sucked” (22). We laughed as we read, but then we came to the rather serious “statement” by Dave Rothbart, the magazine’s creator:

Folks ask me where the best places to find stuff are. Certainly, some spots are more fertile than others. I like sidewalks and bushes, all forms of public transportation, [and] elementary school playgrounds. . . . [But] I think it’s a mistake for folks to believe that you have to go far out of your way to find things. It’s more a matter of simply keeping your eyes peeled during your everyday

wanderings through the world. On your way to work, on your way to school, be aware of what's around you. (2)

Though picking up scraps of paper might seem a far cry from the kinds of academic research methods students are expecting to learn (even as they dread it), this method of engagement helps to frame the stakes, issues, and methods of conducting primary research.

Throughout the semester, students create and use individual weblogs (or "blogs") that serve as a kind of collection space for their various "finds." In my instructions for beginning the blogs, I tell students:

Remember, your blog should follow the *Found* logic: keep your eyes open. You'll want to blog your "finds," whether these are actual finds or (more typically) observational finds about the environments around you. Maybe you read something that makes you think. Maybe you've noticed something funky about the University. Maybe you're outraged by some governmental happenings. Whatever you write about, you will treat this like a "find."

Students can create a framing "theme" for their blogs, which also helps us to discuss ways of seeing as a rhetorical process. For example, many students chose a "UT" theme for their blogs, including campus life, athletics, and campus-related news. In the early stages of students' blog design, I ask them to define their blogs rhetorically by adding "blogrolls" or lists of relevant links to other blogs that relate to the same topic. Students research similar blogs and add links to them from their own main page. This kind of "blog rolling" helps students to refine their own sense of the communities and conversations that surround their blog's focus. Students whose blogs have a UT focus might add links to fellow UT students (sometimes friends) who maintain blogs about campus life. They might also include Austin-specific blogs, such as Austin Metablog and Austin Stories. Many students link to the Burnt Orange Report, a blog that reports on city and campus politics for The University of Texas and Austin. This practice of collecting research in blog format may seem like a high-tech version of the research journal, but the

act of networking changes the possibilities for what research is and can become. Our blog-based research follows the logic of what Jill Walker calls "network literacy," or the (re)socialization of writing:

Weblogs are good as learning journals (searchable, writing practice, catching thoughts, intellectual workout. . .) but all these things could be done in a paper notebook - though the knowledge that other people are (or can be) reading is important. What's more important to teach our students is network literacy: writing in a distributed, collaborative environment. Bringing network literacy to the classroom means jolting students out of the conventional individualistic, closed writing of essays only ever seen by your professor. ("Weblogs")

Walker's argument is even more significant where the practice of "research" is involved. Not only is research commonly seen as individualistic and closed, it is considered something other than writing. It is the act of solo reading that comes before the creative acts. There is little, if any, collaboration or creation that goes into the act of research. Yet, in our classroom, research was not only creative but it was also distributed. Students presented--even performed--their research "finds" for other readers, who could then comment on the find, extend comments on their own blogs, or even register disinterest with a lack of comments.

Our readings and assigned texts worked in tandem with this research in order to expose the rhetorical nature of seeing, reading, and writing. During the second week, for example, students read a lengthy excerpt from Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, where McCloud discusses how images and words mutually shape how we read them. McCloud's examples make sense to students very quickly. We discuss the fact that there are no "stand alone" images or words, since texts are always being "framed" by their (social, cultural, material) contexts. From this starting point, we turn to texts that explicitly restate this "framing" in the language of rhetorical theory. One classic, if not a bit dated, resource is Richard Lanham's *Style: An Anti-Textbook*. Lanham explains that there is no "plain style" of writing since we are always performing some goal for a

particular audience. "A style is a response to a situation," writes Lanham (58). There is no "neutral" writing, in other words; writing is always framed within particular contexts and situations. Our readings help us to establish a theoretical starting point for our work on "the writing process." Although students will be writing factual, researched, and academic texts, they also know that their positions are rhetorical. Instead of transmitting information in/to the readers' minds, they are performing and framing a rhetorical argument for a specific audience.

Once we have read and discussed this theory at length, we turn to several models of rhetorical documentary performance. Our text-based model, H. G. Bissinger's *Friday Night Lights*, is an excellent illustration of McCloud and Lanham's arguments. Bissinger's book documents the 1989 season of the Permian Panthers, one of the most successful high school football teams in Texas. Bissinger uses interviews, participatory documentary narrative, historical records, and images in order to tell the story of Odessa, Texas and their community's race and gender relations, class divisions, and political history--all told through the *topos* of high school football. Because most of my students are from Texas, they are more than familiar with the central role that high school football plays within small (and not so small) towns. Unlike their experiences with many other texts we read, students often find themselves in the position of being "expert witnesses" to the very details that Bissinger writes. We discuss that while Bissinger, as documentarian, collects "factual" research about Odessa and the Panthers, he also *performs* his research rhetorically. He frames his research through stylistic choices and editing decisions. Bissinger's documentary text thus helps students to understand that research is not a matter of transferring external facts to reader's minds. Research is always framed and performed.

After spending time on readings and conducting their own research, students come to form a topic for their documentary. For some students, this topic may relate to an interest they had before the class began. For others, the topic may have developed out of their research and subsequent discussions with other students. After proposing a topic and using feedback to refine the focus, students create a detailed storyboard that outlines their goals, deadlines, research plans, and design blueprints. Students must include a critical analysis of their chosen medium, including an explanation about why this medium is most appropriate for their target audience. This analysis once again focuses attention on rhetorical performativity and research. Although many students initially decide to create a film- or web-based documentary, they later discover that this medium may not be the most strategic or effective choice for their given audience or topic. After addressing questions like these, students begin the process of researching and writing their documentaries. All students submit their documentary drafts for workshopping at least twice. During the workshops, we give oral feedback to the writer about how to continue revising her project in order to make it more effective. Finally, at the semester's end, we "screen" a selection of documentaries that students have voted to watch or read.

INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

My version of Rhetoric 309L, designed around the creation of individual documentary projects, serves several different needs for students at The University of Texas. First, there is a strong institutional need for a course that makes writing its main focus. The University of Texas at Austin is a campus of over 55,000 students, which means that many courses are large, lecture-based classes that feature little writing throughout the semester. Even when students are assigned essays and other forms of writing, instructors often do not have the time to give feedback or comments on drafts. A

course like Rhetoric 309L marks a unique opportunity for students to receive a great deal of attention to their writing. This course emphasizes the recursive roles that invention, revision, critique, and research play in the writing process. Students also learn how to critically respond to others' writing in our workshop setting. We discuss the fact that writing is not an isolated activity but a collaborative and rhetorical one. Because students workshop drafts of their projects, listening to and reading feedback from their classmates, they begin to understand that their own texts are inter/active within the context of our classroom community.

In a larger academic and community context, moreover, Rhetoric 309L encourages students to see their own everyday experiences as material for reflection. The mission of the University aims for the "advancement of society through research, creative activity, scholarly inquiry and the development of new knowledge" ("Core Values"), yet undergraduate students often fail to see themselves as researchers who are joining a scholarly community. Paradoxically, this reluctance is partly born out of our students' earlier academic success. Students at UT boast high SAT scores and excellent high school rankings (nearly 70% of entering freshmen for 2003-2004 were in the top tenth of their class). However, these same students have fallen prey to what some education scholars have dubbed a "culture of testing," where knowledge is seen as extrinsic to the student, held by autonomous experts, and inherently testable. Students in my classes have become accustomed to writing essays that draw heavily from secondary research, reporting what others have already said about their chosen topic. Thus, in order to encourage students to see themselves as potential contributors to scholarly conversations, Rhetoric 309L emphasizes students' ability to conduct primary research: collecting, editing, and commenting on the materials from the world around them.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

While Rhetoric 309L does not necessarily help to create "perfect writers" who can turn out expert prose after our fifteen-week course, it does help to make some dents in students' perceptions about scholarship and expertise. Perhaps more importantly, the course also places research within a social and lived context. Rather than thinking primarily in terms of information and clarity, the logic of the course's documentary projects focuses on interactions within local ecologies. Bringing this logic into the realm of our own rhetorical pedagogy, we are reminded that rhetorically-grounded education can mean something more than learning how to decode elements, analyze texts, and recite information that seems to exist autonomously and acontextually. Our pedagogies can also engage processes and encounters. Not learning by doing, but thinking by doing. Or, better yet, thinking/doing— with a razor thin slash mark barely keeping the two terms from bleeding into each other. This is a rethinking of the "in order to later" model, where students learn methods, skills, and research in order to later produce at other sites (other sites in the university or workplace, for example). This one-way flow can be radically revised in everyday settings, where social ecologies are already in practice. As Rosa Eberly puts it, "[r]hetoric matters because rhetoric—which demands engagement with the living—is the process through which texts are not only produced but also understood to matter" (296; emphasis mine). When we approach a pedagogy that does indeed engage with the lived, by hooking into the processes that are already in play, then we find ourselves engaging in a writing pedagogy whose power is not circumscribed or delimited.

We might call this an affective pedagogy insofar as its method is attuned to what Raymond Williams calls "practical consciousness." That is, the pedagogy is weighted toward the act of engagement. In order to further explore this attunement, we can look to a similar affective pedagogy found in David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's *Facts*,

Artifacts, and Counterfacts, which outlines their basic writing course at The University of Pittsburgh. As they explain in their introduction to the course, it is not so much that "basic writers" are actually *poor writers* as much as they are *weak readers* who often fail to carve a meaning for their own purposes. Yet Bartholomae and Petrosky's pedagogy does not lead students toward better paths to find the meaning—the controlling idea of a text. Instead, they want to teach students how to "make the presentation of meaning possible, a process that is at once an individual's concession to the beliefs of the community and an assertion of his own vision of possibility, of territorial rights" (11). "Good" writers, in other words, are those who have learned how to make their encounters with the texts, and their own particular mis/readings, count.

For Bartholomae and Petrosky, such a pedagogy involves asking students to read texts for moments that they found significant, important, interesting. They explain, "The story that undergirds our course, then, has a necessarily simple structure. It has a reader noticing something and then accounting for the significance of what he read. What is it that a reader notices? . . . [I]t could be anything. . . : an event, a phrase, a moment of confusion. . ." (19). From this point, students are then asked "to find a way of using those moments to talk about a text's meaning" (20). In other words, students assign a significance to those initial "noticings" that they experienced while reading. Basic writers are not less knowledgeable than "advanced" writers, according to Bartholomae and Petrosky, but they are instead "powerless. . . to *do* something with what they read" (22). They are powerless in the face of making their experience—their noticings—into a reading of the text. The problem, according to Bartholomae and Petrosky, is that student writers often fail to see the text *as* text, instead "hearing" it like a truthful conversation that must be retold. The students often fail to see its working as a text that is capable of

being used in new ways for meaning-making. The writers do not represent an author's words as "textual performance—something [the writer] can 'look at'" (27).

However, we might also argue that these sensory metaphors miss the mark. The students' "failure" (if we wish to use this term) is not a failure to *see* (neither is it a failure of hearing). Rather, the failure is perhaps more that the students have failed to *feel* the text. In fact, it is this very failure that Bartholomae and Petrosky come so close to exposing with their *pedagogy of noticing*. It is this failure that the authors attempt to circumvent by designing a basic writing course whose goals include giving students an "intense experience with language. . . ." (102). This intense experience is the course's measure of success, they write, not the higher scores on exams (which don't happen, for the most part) or the creation of "bibliophiles" among students who choose not to read for their own pleasure (since this also does not always happen). Rather, *intensity* in language is the goal. If we were to radically expand Bartholomae and Petrosky's sense of "noticings," we might come to understand that textual "intensities" are part of a larger scene of this "encounter." Indeed, the text is composed of intensities, is itself an intense body. This is why Bartholomae and Petrosky's sense of "noticings" pedagogy can ever work in the first place: the live body of a student encounters a text's own live body.

Bartholomae and Petrosky's pedagogy points to a reading-writing method that uses (encounters with) intensity as a methodology. This is an affective strategy insofar as its approach to discourse involves the kind of embodiment, intense investment, and sociality we saw in the previous chapter. Though "affective intensity" may seem hopelessly ineffable to some, its palpability can be seen in the most ordinary scenes of everyday life. Lawrence Grossberg gives the examples of a rock music fan who "'knows' there is something *more* in rock music which distinguishes it from other forms of music" (*We Gotta Get Out* 86). Of course, the hip-hop fan might just as easily argue that there

is, in fact, something *more* in hip-hop. We could go on with countless examples of fandom and their knowings. In fact, there is nothing *more* in any kind of music except for the intensity within the singular encounters between bodies (of "Hey Joe" and the rock fan's body, for example). While some may protest the legitimacy of a methodology of intensity, therefore, the rock fan takes this intensity as seriously as her life. Bartholomae and Petrosky also take the encounter of intensity seriously, legitimizing the thinking-feeling of practical consciousness as a "way of knowing." Their pedagogical strategy is more than an epistemological approach, therefore. It also honors and attunes to the structures of feeling that comprise everyday life.

Like Bartholomae and Petrosky, I wanted to create a writing pedagogy that might teach students to think in terms of encounters--how to choose, pursue, and engage in those encounters that allow for the least amounts of limitations in thinking and invention. The *pedagogy of noticing* that Bartholomae and Petrosky make initial gestures toward actually raises the issue of encounters with texts; it asks students to reconceptualize the text as a force that encounters the forces of our own everyday experiences. I argue that to teach writing grounded in rhetoric is thus to teach in terms of engagement. It is to teach the connections of everyday life, place, and official discourse. That is, if the goal of teaching rhetoric and writing is to teach *engagement with the world*, then our pedagogies *should* actually engage with the world.

This is also why research is a key term in the course I describe above. The research method in Rhetoric 309L is familiar to any reader of Walter Benjamin and the body of *flaneur*. Indeed, the *Found* research method is Benjamin in disguise, strolling down the Arcades. I argued in chapter two for a rethinking of rhetoric's situation into rhetorical ecologies due to the constant in-processness of everyday life. We are in a ceaseless flux of events, which makes any project of totalization a rather futile endeavor.

However, as I said in previous chapters, this flux does not make reading impossible. It only makes impossible the reading of a totality. Benjamin's fragmentary method offers one research method that acknowledges scenes as only a frozen moment within a larger process. Moreover, the scene is not an objective snippet but an embodied encounter. More than almost any other theorist, Benjamin gave us a logic for reading/researching the streets in their seeming banal details and encounters they afford:

Streets are the dwelling place of the collective. The collective is an eternally unquiet, eternally agitated being that--in the space between the building fronts--experiences, learns, understands, and invents as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls. For this collective, glossy enameled shop signs are a wall decoration as good as, if not better than, an oil painting in the drawing room of a bourgeois; walls with their "Post No Bills" are its writing desk, newspaper stands its libraries, mailboxes its bronze busts, benches its bedroom furniture. . . . [T]he street reveals itself . . . as the furnished and familiar interior of the masses. (423, [M3a,2])

Researching the streets, according to Benjamin, is more than a matter of collecting facts or uncovering a fixed totality. Indeed, researching the street through a fragmentary method (as Benjamin performed in his work on the Paris arcades) is a form of analysis concerned with structures of feeling. As Benjamin explains this research method: "In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes only in lightening flashes. The text is the long roll of thunder that follows" (456, [N1,1]). Or, to put it in other terms, the method of this research is montage. "I needn't *say* anything," writes Benjamin. "Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse--these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them" (460, [N1a,7]). Because we cannot get "knowledge" except in lightening flashes, Benjamin leads us toward a method that embraces the flashes, the traces, as our field of operation. The streets serve as our spaces of engagement, and while we cannot arrest its development, we can *make use of* the flashes. Benjamin thus illuminates an original logic of generative research.

Whereas Benjamin discusses the street in terms of "making history" from the fields within which we are situated, Geoffery Sirc more explicitly brings composition pedagogy (back) to the streets in his concern for students' engagement with their own language. "I want to bring the field back down to earth," writes Sirc, "to a grounding in everyday life. . ." (188). Sirc prefers to speak of composition across the topoi of architecture and urbanism, which yield a sharp vocabulary with which to (re)envision our work. Sirc operates street-wise somewhere at the intersection of metaphor and critique, laying down a different direction for writing pedagogy. The problem we face is one of composition: "[B]land architecture . . . evokes simplistic programs. The spaces of our classrooms should offer compelling environments in which to inhabit situations of writing instruction, helping intensify consciousness in the people who use them. Can such intensification happen in a conventional writing classroom?" (1-2). Sirc finds the answer to this question very doubtful. However, the problem is not, as some believe, that we have not properly brought students into (our) academic discourse communities. Neither is the problem a failure to convince students that they need to join these communities. Sirc instead finds the problem in our unwillingness to leave these very communities--and the grand monuments housing them--in order to see what is valuable on the streets, our students' homebase. Our job is to cleanse them of the "street," making them suitable to enter our monuments:

[T]hey enter the puristic Greek Temples of our classrooms as exiles from Main Street, denied their verbal heritage, their textual homeland. We take away their status as writers immediately. They are "students," a term mutually exclusive from "writer" [But] how can we expect people to care very passionately about erecting our grand monuments on the still-freshly agent-oranged ruins of their homelands? (192-193)

Though he uses a different set of vocabulary, Sirc arguably makes the case for a pedagogy that legitimizes practical consciousness among all thinkers, writers, and

dwellers in the everyday. In other words, Sirc asks how we teach students to reflect, invent, and write (from) the very elements of their ecologies. If I take seriously the mission statement to pursue the "advancement of society through research, creative activity, scholarly inquiry and the development of new knowledge" with my students, then I am bound to make our local ecologies and local context the place of writing. We can attempt to learn methods for "making something" of the fragments. In the project I have created here, for example, I have attempted to "make something" from the lightening flashes on my streets in Austin. My method, like my theory, is one of engagement.

But why would we ever want to reconceptualize writing and reading in terms of a pedagogy of noticing or pedagogy of intensive encounter? For one thing, as we have seen in previous chapters, bodies are actually bodies-in-relation. We are radically and forever open to other bodies, which means that thought is affected by our relations. We enter into composition with other bodies, and from those compositions (and into them) will resonate thinking. Freedom comes in (though not as agentive free will) where certain bodies make decisions about the kinds of encounters they will undertake. In Moira Gatens' terms, we can begin to rethink agency here as "the power that one possesses actively to select one's encounters rather than suffer chance associations" (166). This is more than merely taking on a different kind of metaphor for our pedagogy. Reading and writing in different ways are actually matters of entering into certain kinds of relations (and *not* entering into others).

This pedagogy of intensity or noticing operates through a very simple premise: *to feel your way is not to fail*. In fact, pedagogies that espouse the opposite quite often set students up for failure. If we refuse to allow students to follow those intensities that are created by their particular experiences with a text, we have refused them the opportunity

to actively select their encounters. Students thus face the situation of being what Bartholomae and Petrosky call “powerless” to do something with the text in their writing. Yet students are not powerless because they lack skills, knowledge, or material resources. Rather, they are “powerless” because the classroom itself has limited the ways in which students are allowed to call upon their experience of encounter. Rather than relegating a student’s visceral meanderings to a preliminary stage before “real work” of writing, the affectively-attuned classroom posits that such feeling is itself a strategic form of literacy. The powerful student is one who can do something--or, in Benjamin's terms, *make something*--with whatever sensations (boredom, excitement, interest, anger, pleasure) an encounter produces.

Obviously we should not ignore an obvious fact about the very real experience of affect: you do not have to teach people to have affective encounters; they already happen. The music fan has an affective encounter with her favorite album whether or not she articulates this encounter. But, by the same token, the composition class is often not a place where these encounters are valued. Feeling the text is often a “bonus,” not the goal—and certainly not a *teaching strategy*. In fact, it is much more common to lament the student reaction to a text that is “merely” a visceral reaction. Yet this mere viscerality is an intensity that has been affected by another intense body. Though I suspect that we would resist describing our scholarship in these terms, successful academics are arguably those who know how to follow a feeling, a tangent, an intensity. We know that we can *do* something with them. Even in moments of extreme boredom with a text, for example, my reading experiences are comprised of these sensual encounters. I know that I can follow the boredom to *do* something with it. I write through my intensities. At the same time, however, writing instructors often seem reluctant to ask students to read and write through and with intensities. We seem much more interested in initiating students into the

grand monuments of academia, which tend to see the text as something to look at (a *thing*), rather than as a collection of forces (a *field of potential energies*). I argue that there is real value in recasting literacy in terms of actual encounters among collections of forces. Every act of reading and writing is an encounter.

CRITICAL REFLECTION: WHY AFFECT AND RHETORIC/COMPOSITION?

Although documentaries have the advantage of sounding remarkably exciting to students, at least in comparison to traditional essays, the heart of this course does not lie in the flashy finished products. As I say above, our main focus is on *research*. Whereas research is often considered by students (and even some teachers) as a process *leading to* public production (a means to an end, so to speak), the heart of our class involved a logic of generative research that takes *research as* an aim. What is perhaps most unique about the projects in Rhetoric 309L is that research is conducted as a kind of engagement. In other words, writing is conducted as if students' material location and situated context matters in their search for access to official discourses. The result is a writing that can be difficult, amazing, rewarding, less-than-spectacular, or even off-the-mark. But the projects consistently depend on the student writer as the primary "expert" who generates the research and the critical perspectives on that research. In this critical reflection on the course I describe above, I would like to make the case for attuning to affect. Although there are many benefits for removing the pedagogical stigma from affect, I argue here that this act can have an especially positive impact in our methodological approaches to research and writing.

When I stated earlier that the heart of our class focuses on engaged research, I did not only mean that our research focuses on local issues and spaces. Instead, my notion of engaged research understands research itself as materially productive. One implication of

conceiving rhetorics in ecological or event-full terms emerges at the level of *production*. In her discussion of classrooms as (potentially) protopublic bodies, Eberly argues that rhetoric is a process, not a substance that inheres in the collection of traits within a given text. Instead, she continues, “Rhetoric is thus *not only understood but practiced* as the powerful architectonic productive art that it is” (293). Emphasizing production should not mean falling into the trap of “real vs. artificial” writing situations, but instead should stress the ways in which rhetorical productions are inseparable from lived encounters of public life. Richard Marback calls this inseparability a “material theory of rhetoric,” which “would articulate the impact of material and representational practices on each other” (87). The kinds of pedagogies I hope to pursue in courses like Rhetoric 309L attune to this *mutuality* of material practice, embodied experience, and discursive representation that operate in public spaces every day.

The class blogs have helped us to move this productive, engaged research beyond mere representation. This blogging strategy is one of the most vigorous fulfillments of the University's professed mission of "advanc[ing] . . . society through research, creative activity, scholarly inquiry and the development of new knowledge" by working outside the relatively closed monuments of academia and in/to the Main Streets of everyday life. Indeed, some of the most compelling “live” examples of generative research are city blogs, or weblogs (often written by individuals) that track the life of a place through images, text, comments, and links to relevant stories and sites. Take the example of G. Schindler's photoblog, which documents the life of Austin and its urban spaces through images. The blog writer, or “blogger,” tracks the city in what we might recognize as a kind of local-research-in-the-wild. Schindler is a stalker of sorts, documenting local places without any other *telos* beyond the documentation itself. His images are unframed by extra commentary or descriptions, allowing the reader to simply drift through the city

in a kind of *derive*. Through his images of signs, storefronts, abandoned couches, and handmade lost pet flyers, Schindler captures the (extra)ordinary details of life in the city. He does not attempt to give readers the “true” version of Austin, but is instead documenting his own encounters with/in the city.



Fig. 5.1. Images from Schindler’s photoblog

These encounters can also be tracked among (student) users as an example of how representations of place—like Austin—are constructed discursively, visually, affectively, and link-fully. Because this kind of documentation is often open to comments and citation in other blogs and websites, the “research” grows in social waves. It also attunes us to the operative and public nature of rhetoric, which Michael Warner suggests in his description of what constitutes a public:

No single text can create a public. Nor can a single voice, a single genre, or even a single medium. All are insufficient. . . , since a public is understood to be an ongoing space of encounter for discourse. It is not texts themselves that create publics, but the concatenation of texts through time. . . . Between the discourse that comes before and the discourse that comes after, one must postulate some kind of link. And the link has a social character; it is not mere consecutiveness in time, but a context of interaction. (62)

The networked nature of blogs puts research into a circulation that becomes linked, put to other uses, transformed. In fact, without such citation and use by others, a blog is as good as dead. After a bit of caveat-ing, we might even dub it an act of “open source” research,

exposing the myth of research as a personal process that only *later* leads to a public text. The photoblog's logic turns documentation into a kind of social production in itself. Rather than thinking *only* in terms of audience, purpose, clarity, and information, therefore, the logic of the photoblog focuses on the *effects* and *concatenations* of our local ecologies. Bringing this logic into the realm of our own rhetorical pedagogy, we are reminded that rhetorically-grounded education can mean something more than learning how to decode elements, analyze texts, and thinking *about* public circulations of rhetoric. It can also engage processes and encounters.

In addition to a different methodological approach to research, an affective attunement can also impact our writing methods. One such different method that tacitly emerged in the course of creating documentaries was a rethinking of writing as *design*. In his article "Design and the New Rhetoric: Productive Arts in the Philosophy of Culture," Richard Buchanan calls rhetoric an art of design insofar as design "offers a pathway for bringing theory [our ways of seeing the world] into a closer relationship with practical action and the creation of diverse kinds of . . . experiences" (186). Design, like rhetoric, can be thought of as having an architectonic character. Texts that are designed *for a use*, *for circulation*, and *for encounter* require student writers to begin thinking in terms of the kind of public event-ness that Warner describes as happening in channels of circulation. In my own classes, design has become a key term for the shape of projects that students create. We focus on the concatenations of our local ecologies through projects that transform something in our environments.

Design itself can also be a generative method, as students discovered in the course of creating documentaries. Echoing the logic as our blogging researchers-in-the-wild, the act of designing documentaries can in itself often become a heuristic for invention. Consider my student Jonathan Li's documentary on Asian gangs in a southeast Houston

area called Scarsdale. Jonathan originally wanted to document this little-known aspect of Houston gang life, as well as his own experiences, while also providing what he called “causes” of Scarsdale’s gang activity among young Asian males. But in the course of designing the documentary, which he created as an interactive CD-ROM, Jonathan began to see the problematics of laying out “causes” as just one more aspect of the documentary. When he actually had to create four small squares as links to his different sections, he experienced the troubling aspect of *conflating* social, economic, racial, and other factors into a simple node that (at least materially) seemed to be equated on his opening page with his other links. (In fact, *because* of this experience in the act of designing, Jonathan ended up commenting on the problem of identifying “the” cause of gang activity in Scarsdale. In this sense, designing itself can generate effects and encounters in interesting ways for student writers.

REDIRECTIONS FOR AFFECTIVE PEDAGOGIES

Although this brief description of one course cannot possibly address all possibilities for a pedagogy that attunes to writing and rhetoric's affective dimensions, my hope is that it exposes one example of how the concept of affect meets writing studies in a radical way. As we have seen in the previous chapters, writing involves a complex mutuality between sensual and signifying effects. The two dimensions exist in proximity to one another: meaning and feeling always shadow the other in rhetoric without reducing to the other. Here we begin to see a tension at work between significations and the erratic, obstinate, live operations of affect. Raymond Williams suggests that we must hold this tension open, resisting the urge subsume all of culture under the heading of signification. Since explicit social forms do not exhaust the range of culture, we cannot fully consume culture via representations. "[P]ractical consciousness is always more than a handling of

fixed forms and units," writes Williams. "There is a frequent tension between the received interpretations and practical experience. Where this tension can be made direct and explicit, or where some alternative interpretation is available, we are still within a dimension of relatively fixed forms" (130). Of course, comments like those from the WPA-L discussion reflect the discomfort that this irreducible mutuality presents. "[T]he tension is as often an unease, a stress, a displacement, a latency: the moment of conscious comparison not yet come, often not even coming," explains Williams (130). But uncomfortable as this tension might be, discussing affect may indeed move us into new orbits of social and political possibilities, as Worsham suggests.

Moreover, this tension generates a number of implications for the work of composition and the concept of literacy. Attending to both orders opens up some very *practical* ways of talking about culture as lived event. It also opens up possibilities for attuning to culture and "reading" the world. This attunement offers up an/other kind of rhetorical literacy--an affective literacy--that is not grounded in only the explicit order of representation, signification, and epistemology. Instead, an affective literacy would be a strange literacy, one that tunes into the lived dimensions of culture that do not surface or emerge in full representation. Attuning to culture's affective field allows us to follow Worsham's call to "expand our notions of literacy to their widest possible circumference, to a point where literacy . . . involve[s] us, and our students, in more than an epistemic relation to the world and to the earth" ("Writing" 101). If the world does not only emerge in recognizable ways, but also operates through implicit structures of feeling, then our literacy methods cannot continue to fall back upon modes of reading that only traffic in explicit articulation. We need a literacy that acknowledges, along with Maurice Blanchot, that I am not the center of what I know (10). That is, my ability to articulate and explicate the world cannot ever possibly cover its full operation.

One of the most significant reasons for *why* we should talk about affect thus lies in the ways in which it changes our views of pedagogy. In "An Affirmative Theory of Desire," Christa Albrecht-Crane argues that we can become more attuned to the affect and desires that infuse the classroom already. Our pedagogies can begin to explore those "other processes" that are present to the writing scene:

[A]mong them [are] processes of affective production and creation. Such processes are driven by the desire to produce affective connections, resonances, and all sorts of affect-infused offshoots, movements, and relations. . . . [T]eachers and students desire affective engagements in innumerable, minute, diverse affective moves. Affect is ubiquitous, in the classroom as well (24).

Albrecht-Crane sends out a call that is receiving more attention in composition studies: the call to theorize those resonances that have too long been our unacknowledged partners in the classroom. It is the call that works to inform the pedagogy I describe above, as well as the pedagogical call that mutually shapes my theory.

Therefore, without forgetting to read culture for its significations and meaningful contents (as if we *could* forget such a thing), our literacies can stretch further to the rhythm, texture, accent, and intensities that cause culture to go live. As a methodological augmentation, this affective literacy attunes to the multi-leveled event of culture: the qualified level of content as well as the affective intensities that "connect" the world in a thread of experience. In Worsham's words, such a literacy "would no longer function primarily as an agency in the articulation of knowledge . . . ; instead, it would become an indispensable agency for making the world strange and infinitely various" ("Writing" 102). It becomes a way of acknowledging that the world does not only function in explicit ways.

Notes

¹ See Mark Hansen's *New Philosophy for New Media* for an excellent argument detailing the relationship between new media and affect.

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