COMPOSING PLACE

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Abstract:

In James Berlin's, *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures*, he outlines how Social-Epistemic Rhetoric (SER) can inform composition theory and pedagogy. Much of Berlin's aim is to show how theories of SER can be used as a tool to expose for students discursive practices that reinforce political, economic, and social inequalities that exist and are perpetuated in the production, distribution, and reception of texts. But Berlin also describes aspects of SER that includes the social and material conditions, and how these forces also influence discourse and knowledge. This dissertation extends Berlin's stance on how the social and material conditions operate in the production, distribution, and reception of texts. As a result, "place" is a discursive construct that emerges through language by an individual in conjunction with the social and material conditions of a particular historical moment. Subsequently, the way one composes texts is discursively influenced by place, and this has consequences to the way one makes meaning, the way one understands knowledge, the way one interprets/analyzes history, the way one understands oneself in relation to others, and the way one teaches writing.

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PREFACE

Finding a place to begin this dissertation, I am reminded of the often-quoted lines to Kenneth Burke's parlor analogy, outlined in *The Philosophy of Literary Forms*. For Burke, all intellectual endeavors embody an unending conversation between people across time in a parlor. And for newcomers to the world of academia, this parlor can be quite spectacular and awe-inspiring when one begins to listen in on conversations that have been happening for over 2,000 years. Burke writes:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. (110)

For me, the key term in this analogy is the metaphoric "oar." It leads me to consider another analogy, one that includes a skiff, raft, boat, or some such buoyant vehicle that might keep one afloat and allow one with an oar in hand to navigate through the conversational waters with some sense of stability. This metaphor is appropriate in more ways than one.

During the 2014 Rhetoric Society of America (RSA) conference, I had the pleasure of listening to Dr. James Murphy talk about the challenges new scholars face with studying all that has come before, and the work currently being done in the discipline of rhetoric. He jokingly shared, and I paraphrase, "I do not envy you. One is expected to drink a tidal wave through a single straw." His comment resonates with me today.

In light of both Burke and Murphy's analogy, I must admit the trepidation that begins with opening the floodgates in writing and presenting a dissertation of my own scholarly research. It is my hope, in presenting this research, that I may successfully dip my oar into the current waters, and find a place within the conversation, one that adds and propels the conversation forward.

INTRODUCTION

A Memory of a Lost Place

As a child, I vacationed once a year at Eagle Lake in August. One evening, I set out upon a trail. The sun was setting, and I had the feeling to turn back to camp, but I decided to press my luck a little longer and follow the path that lay before me. It was not long before the evening light was blocked by the trees, and I found myself feeling lost. The trail crisscrossed around trees, and diverged with other trails leading towards other directions. A slight panic began to rise as noises were heard in the distance, among the trees, with the darkness increasing around me.

I remember this moment for many reasons. First, I discovered how small I was in comparison to the forest and all the trees. I remember the feeling of isolation, and the terror of being alone in an unfamiliar place, removed from the security of knowing my surrounding environment. I discovered how the shadows of darkness opens the mind to see and hear things that may or may not be there—believing the voice in my head and all the strange ideas that manifested in my thoughts. The experience was not unlike Robert Frost's "The Demiurge's Laugh,"

> It was far in the sameness of the wood;
> I was running with joy on the Demon's trail,
> Though I knew what I hunted was no true god.
> It was just as the light was beginning to fail

That I suddenly heard—all I needed to hear (1-5)

I turned and ran like hell, tracing my steps as best I could to find the way out of the forest and back to the campsite. I told this story to no one, making it back and pretending I simply took a long walk by the lake. But the memory of that evening has stayed with me. The experience of being lost, finding oneself in an unfamiliar place, has left an indelible mark. Reflecting upon the memory now, I realize that the disorientation, helplessness, and terror of a vast world (experienced through the eyes of a child), were only mitigated by the safety found in the social structures of a familiar environment in contrast to the forest.

The places we wander through, whether in nature or society, are not simply scenic. Our surroundings have a profound influence on our senses, on what we believe to be true, how we see ourselves in the world, and how we find our way. When one looks at this influence, and all the ways in which our surroundings guide our thoughts and actions, one discovers how a place can elicit a world of discovery—one full of mystery and awe.

Lost in Composition and Rhetoric

My childhood experience of being lost in the woods is not wholly unlike treading through studies of composition and rhetoric today. Trails in theory, practice, and pedagogy can often feel like traveling within a labyrinth where some paths run parallel, some are faintly seen, some diverge in awkward ways, some dead-end or fall off abruptly, and some seem to circle back to earlier ground.

Inevitably, while exploring this discipline, one encounters voices, ideas, and signposts that lead in every-which-way. Each person comes to this labyrinth with

different experiences and different backgrounds, and each trail blazed through the field is unique. This dissertation will be no exception.

A traditional literature review is intended to situate research squarely within a particular conversation. The topic of conversation that this dissertation parachutes into borders different regions in the field, with different surveyors who have mapped the region in different ways, with different methods, and different assumptions that guide their work. As a result, this literature review on the study of "place" will be slightly different. This literature review will begin broadly, and increasingly narrow-in on the conversation that will encompass this dissertation. That being said, this work will situate itself from a consistent frame of reference, specifically with the New Rhetoric movement. This positioning allows for the inclusion of different views from different scholars as it attempts to find common ground in seeing the overall terrain.

A Discipline of Assimilation

Unlike other disciplines in academia, whether chemistry, history, philosophy, political science, etc., disciplines that have a somewhat standard subject matter for study, the field and discipline of "composition and rhetoric" is one that is quite simply best described as an amalgam, a mixture of different subject matters that relate to writing, and the study of language use generally. In her study over the discipline's professionalization, Maureen Daly Goggin has described this diversity metaphorically as "mixed blossoms in one garden" (139). Her study focuses on the development of professional journals in the field, and how these journals gave disciplinary distinction to composition and rhetoric. Goggin writes:

> [T]he editorial mission statements published in each of these journals show that both are concerned with promoting scholarship and research in a variety of modes and in encouraging cross-disciplinary perspectives. JAC "is especially interested in research and theoretical discussions examining *cognition, discourse theory, epistemology, gender, ideology, research methods in composition, rhetoric, style, and the connections between contemporary criticism and composition theory*." (my emphasis 139-140)

As the *JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Culture, and Politics'* editorial mission highlights, the professional journals in composition and rhetoric actively embraces diversity in its submissions. And as exciting as this diversity is, it is important to note that the field of composition and rhetoric has increasingly become like the "Borg" in *Star Trek*, one that actively embodies a collective hive of diverse interests. Having said that, let me welcome the reader into the collective hive: "We are the Borg. Your biological and technological distinctiveness will be added to our own. Resistance is futile." All kidding aside, there is a real heterogeneity to the study of composition and rhetoric that is important to unpack, and explore further.

Plato once argued in the *Gorgias* that rhetoric is devoid of a subject matter (except maybe flattery), and that it lacks being a discipline, art, or techne: "it is a certain pursuit that is not artful but belongs to a soul that is skilled at guessing, courageous, and terribly clever by nature at associating with human beings . . . . it seems to be an art, but—as my argument goes—is not an art" (463b, Nichols Jr. 46). From an outside perspective, some today might be tempted to carry a similar argument forward when looking at contemporary studies in composition and rhetoric—or at the very least, make a

claim that it is a discipline that is fractured and lacks any centrality of subject matter. Goggin writes, “Rhetoric is paradoxically powerful and fragile. It is powerful precisely because it is at the center of all knowledge, and all knowledge is at its center. However, it is also fragile for precisely the same reason” (2). And when one looks at contemporary studies in composition and rhetoric, the question arises: How can one discipline claim unification when engaged in scholarship that actively includes gender, epistemology, ideology, ontology, civic engagement, pedagogy, genre studies, digital humanities, ecology, philology, history, etc.—all the while concerned with theories of composition and rhetoric specifically? What gives composition and rhetoric an ability to appropriate such diverse areas of study?

James Berlin writes, “To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality” (“Contemporary Composition” 766). Berlin makes a claim that begins to answer the question of what scholars in composition and rhetoric (CR) do; it is an assumption I maintain and would like to further elaborate on. Teaching writing, and more specifically, teaching and studying the use of symbols, has consequences to the world in which we live—namely, influencing what “version of reality” we participate within. And these consequences can be seen in terms of gender, epistemology, ideology, ontology, civic engagement, pedagogy, genre studies, digital humanities, visual rhetoric, ecology, and all the rest. As a result, the field of CR can seem quite monolithic. And because of the pervasive interdisciplinary scholarship, any single topic in the field that is researched requires a literature review that captures conversations within conversations, and disciplines blending with other disciplines for aims and purposes that don’t always seem

to align. To actively delineate each and every thread of influence is not feasible, but a general picture is still possible.

New Rhetoric and Composition Studies: Establishing a Frame of Reference

Since the 1950s, the "New Rhetoric" movement has played a major role in the development and scholarship within the field of composition studies up to present day. Although debates abound as to when the New Rhetoric movement actually began, and who officially started the movement, there is general agreement that the work of figures such as Kenneth Burke, Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, and I.A. Richards were critical in calling attention to the importance of studying rhetoric in relation to teaching and studying writing and communication. And even though this is true post-1950, it is also true that rhetoric (as a discipline in-and-of-itself) has been used to teach writing well before this time. Rhetoric has been used to teach writing at the university well before the New Rhetoric movement began, whether going back to Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* in the 18th century, Alexander Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric* in the 19th century, or Gertrude Buck's *A Course in Argumentative Writing* in the early 20th century. But the "New Rhetoric" movement connected with Burk, Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca, and Richards, prompted a revived form of rhetoric that transformed the traditional theories and approaches outlined by previous scholars such as Blair, Bain, and Buck.

This revived attention, and revived form of rhetoric, played a critical role in the emerging discipline of composition studies in the 20th century. In many ways, composition studies turned to the study of rhetoric as a means of developing new theories and methodologies for teaching and studying writing and communication. Rhetoric

provided a form of legitimacy for modern composition studies, lending its history, theories, and methodologies for studying writing, communication, and language practices in general. Robert Connors writes that the "[New Rhetoricians] forced the evolution of Contemporary composition-rhetoric in the direction of new theory. . . .[T]hese scholars moved Contemporary composition-rhetoric toward epistemological questions, definitions of problems, data gathering" (16). In many ways, rhetoric was crucial in helping composition studies gain disciplinary distinction and professionalization, especially as composition studies began to mark off a territory of its own in English departments. This movement would be influential for much of the scholarship and practices in pedagogy for composition studies, even up until today.

The history of the New Rhetoric movement, and its relation to composition studies, is complicated, but important to address for numerous reasons. First, it is significant to note that scholars in rhetoric who have helped influence composition studies are not always aligned, or participate within composition studies. And likewise, not all composition scholars in the field are aligned, or participate within rhetorical studies. And finally, the New Rhetoric movement itself is just one of many movements in the field of composition and rhetoric. That being said, the New Rhetoric movement has been a major part in driving the discipline forward, and establishing a relationship of mutual needs, where composition studies is informed by rhetorical traditions of composing texts, and composition studies has led to advances in variant forms of rhetorical studies including digital, visual, and spatial.

This interconnected relationship can lead one to question where boundaries lie between scholars working in rhetoric, scholars working in composition, and scholars

working in both *composition and rhetoric*.[1] This becomes especially complicated when knowing that the New Rhetoric movement itself actively embraces all different types of scholars who participate in all different types of disciplines, each with different approaches and assumptions when looking at writing, communication, and language practices. One glance at Theresa Enos and Stuart C. Brown's *Professing the New Rhetorics: A Sourcebook*, brings this point home with works that include: Ferdinand De Saussure (Linguistics), Ernesto Grassi (Philosophy), Michel Foucault (Poststructualism), E.D. Hirsch, Jr. (Cultural Studies), and others.

The purpose of this discussion is not to outline a history of the field, but rather to establish a clear frame of reference before moving forward, one that recognizes its own limited positioning to the overall discipline of composition and rhetoric. This work is situated by the assumptions outlined by the New Rhetoric movement. As a result, this literature review over "place," and the importance of studying the social and material conditions of a text, will be framed and delineated from this inclusive perspective within the field. Before moving forward, it is important to further unpack these views and assumptions of the New Rhetoric.

Perspective of the New Rhetoric

Theresa Enos and Stuart C. Brown's *Professing the New Rhetorics: A Sourcebook* represents an important perspective when considering the New Rhetoric movement. The sourcebook is divided into two sections. The first section is dedicated to select theories that qualify as creating "new" theories of rhetoric, including De Saussure, Richards, Burke, Bahktin, Weaver, Grassi, Toulmin, McKeon, Perelman, Foucault, Polanyi, Habermas, Barthes, and Booth (xi). The second section is entitled, "Commentary and

Application," and represents ways in which these "new" theories of rhetoric are put to practice, creating knowledge and meaning through the study of language, writing, and human communication practices. As Enos and Brown write, "The [second] section illustrates current attention to the role language has in making and recording knowledge as well as directs attention to the study of rhetoric itself—its value and its reemergence as a discipline" (xi). Figures in this section include Bryant, Ohmann, Scott, Ehninger, Halloran, Eagleton, Hirsch Jr., Fisher, Lunsford, Corder, Freire and Macedo, Bizzell, and Berlin (viii).

These two sections in the sourcebook represent a division between theory and praxis. They reflect a real division that exists within the New Rhetoric movement. There are scholars who have created new forms and theories of rhetoric, and there are scholars who have applied these new forms and theories in ways that open up new discussions in epistemology, literacy, cultural studies, composition practices, and more.

Much of the "New Rhetoric" scholarship in the field of "composition and rhetoric" specifically, falls within the second category, the section that adapts and applies these new theories in ways that address issues in composition and rhetoric studies broadly (see previous discussion over the JAC editorial mission). But before narrowing in on scholars in CR who have carried the New Rhetoric movement forward in the field, there is an assumption that bridges the two sections in Enos and Brown's sourcebook—an assumption that must be brought forward in order to see how the theory and praxis of New Rhetoric is unified, even in its apparent diversity.

This unifying principle is an assumption that is stated by Enos and Brown about "the role language has in making and recording knowledge" (xi). Whether creating or

applying new theories of rhetoric, the New Rhetoric movement is positioned by the assumption that language plays a critical role in the way in which we make meaning and knowledge, and that there is not just *one* way in which this meaning making is expressed, but rather a plethora of examples and forms of language practices—or rhetorics—that must be studied. In this way, each new theory of communication, writing, language use, literacy, etc. is an expressed "rhetoric" that when applied in different ways, to different texts, and in different disciplines, has the power to generate knowledge and meaning.

When looking at the scholarship in CR, and the influence the New Rhetoric movement has had on the field, one scholar has made great strides in fostering a space of research that carries this assumption forward in composition and rhetoric. His expressed position about the role New Rhetoric has created in composition studies will be the precursor to the way this dissertation will position itself on the topic and importance of "place" in composition and rhetoric studies today.

Social-Epistemic Rhetoric in Composition Studies: A Look Towards Berlin

James Berlin has written extensively on the history and development of composition studies in the 20th century in numerous books and articles. Much of Berlin's work focuses on how the study of rhetoric has informed composition theory, development, and practice—going so far in his early work to categorize composition practices into three distinct rhetorics: objective rhetorics, subjective rhetorics, and transactional rhetorics (*Rhetoric and Reality*). Berlin uses these rhetorical categories to articulate different writing pedagogies observable in the field between 1960 and 1975; he connects current-traditional approaches with objective rhetorics (140), expressionistic approaches with subjective rhetorics (145), and epistemic approaches with transactional rhetorics (155). In

this work, published in 1987, one sees Berlin beginning to map out and articulate a place for New Rhetoric in composition studies—an area he articulates as "epistemic rhetoric," and in later works as "social-epistemic rhetoric" (*Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*).

In his early conception of epistemic rhetoric for composition studies, Berlin connects the theory and idea to communication scholar Robert L. Scott, and Scott's 1967 article "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," published in *Central States Speech Journal* (*Rhetoric and Reality* 165). The term "epistemic rhetoric" was gaining ground in English studies, being used by scholars such as Berlin, Kenneth Dowst, C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon (ibid). Even though the term is coined by Scott, Berlin is conscientious to highlight that the theory has evolved from the rhetorical work by scholars such as I.A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, S.I. Hayakawa, Alfred Korzybski, Daniel Fogarty, Richard Weaver, Marie Hochmuth Nichols, and Northrop Frye (168).

Epistemic rhetoric calls attention to not only how we craft/compose communication, but that in the act of composing, in the act of using language, one is simultaneously creating knowledge and meaning. The end result is that rhetoric is entwined with epistemology, and epistemology is integral to rhetoric. Berlin explains:

> Epistemic rhetoric holds that language is the key to understanding the dialectical process involved in the rhetorical act. Knowledge does not exist apart from language. Thus, the task of the interlocutor is not simply to find the appropriate words to communicate—to contain—a nonverbal reality. Language, instead, embodies and generates knowledge, and there is no knowledge without language. (*Rhetoric and Reality* 166-67)

This idea that rhetoric is epistemic, that language shapes, creates, and records knowledge—as talked about earlier—is a central tenet to the New Rhetoric movement. It is here that we see Berlin articulate, and open a space for a New Rhetoric position within composition studies. But Berlin is not alone in opening and participating in this space. Berlin links this New Rhetoric space in CR with work previously accomplished by other composition scholars. In his article, "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," Berlin highlights how:

> The clearest pedagogical expression of the New Rhetoric—or what might be called Epistemic Rhetoric—is found in Ann E. Berthoff's *Forming/Thinking/Writing: The Composing Imagination* (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden, 1978) and Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike's *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1970). These books have behind them the rhetorics of such figures as I.A. Richards and Kenneth Burke and the philosophical statements of Susan Langer, Ernst Cassierer, and John Dewey. (264)

As is seen, the influence of the New Rhetoric movement, and Berlin's view of "epistemic rhetoric," was gaining ground in composition scholarship through the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1990s, theories of epistemic rhetoric in composition studies would become an established area for composition scholarship.

Berlin's work goes on to outline another critical assumption that is connected with the New Rhetoric movement, showing how language practices are varied, encompassing multiple communities, and that epistemic rhetoric recognizes that no single "rhetoric"

exists, but that there are multiple communities of rhetoric, and unique forms of language practices. He writes:

> For epistemic rhetoric, language is not, however, a single, monolithic entity. Within each society there is a host of languages, each serving as the center of a particular discourse community. Each community—whether made up of biologists, composition teachers, autoworkers, ward members, or baseball fans—is built around a language peculiar to itself so that membership in the group is determined by the ability to use the language according to the prescribed method. (*Rhetoric and Reality* 167)

And it is here—once again—that we see how the New Rhetoric movement is unified by its inclusive beliefs that actively embrace multiple theories of rhetoric, and multiple systems for language practices. It is here that Berlin grounds New Rhetoric's influence in composition studies, helping scholars begin to look at language practices as independent discourse communities, whether in the university, in other disciplines, in the workplace, or within institutional environments.

In Berlin's final work, *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* (1996), epistemic rhetoric is expanded to "social-epistemic rhetoric." In this work, Berlin expands epistemic rhetoric to include the social, political, and historical context by which communication and texts are composed. Berlin writes:

> Social-epistemic rhetoric starts from Burke's formulation (1966) of language as symbolic action, to be distinguished from the sheer motion of the material. 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. These conditions are of an economic, social, and political nature, and they change over time. But they too can be known and acted upon only through the discourse available at any historical moment. Thus, the subject that experiences and the material and social conditions experienced are discursively constituted in historically specific terms. (88-89)

Berlin's theory of social-epistemic rhetoric (SER), adapted in part from New Rhetoric scholar Kenneth Burke, opens a critical space for conducting research in composition and rhetoric studies. Berlin uses this position to articulate an argument for approaching composition studies, largely positioned alongside postmodernist theorists that include Derrida, Barthes, Lyotard, and Foucault (43). Positioned with current postmodernist theories of the mid-1990s, Berlin makes an argument for SER in composition studies that transforms the classroom, exposing CR scholars to see that when we teach writing and the study of language use, we are actually studying "subject formation within the framework of economic, social, and political conditions" (83). In other words, discourse is infused in the historical moment, infused by the social and material conditions in which it is produced, and infused by the "economic, social, and political conditions" (ibid) of its time. The implications of this have consequences to the way writing is taught, and the way language use and texts are studied and analyzed.

The purpose of this conversation is not to go into Berlin's full argument, but rather show how Berlin opens a space in CR studies for analyzing the economic, social, political, material, ideological, and historical aspects that exists in language use, and the

study of language practices, based largely from the New Rhetoric movement, while simultaneously carrying on the assumption that language creates, shapes, and records knowledge in the context in which it is produced. This perspective is critical moving forward.

Let me be clear here. This dissertation is situated by the beliefs and assumptions of Berlin's SER previously reviewed. These assumptions include the beliefs that:

1. "To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality" ("Contemporary Composition" 766).
2. "Language . . . embodies [a nonverbal reality] and generates knowledge, and there is no knowledge without language" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 166-67).
3. There is no monolithic, singular, universal language practice; each and every language practice is an individual one, "peculiar to itself" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 167).
4. "[T]he subject that experiences and the social conditions experienced are discursively constituted in historically specific terms" (*Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* 88-89).

Working from this perspective and outlining these assumptions (or presuppositions), this dissertation addresses research questions that look at how place operates, and the implication that place—and theories of place—might hold when studying, analyzing, and teaching composition. These research questions include:

- How might certain signifying practices be connected with the surrounding social and material conditions in which that signifying practice (or production) is expressed?

- If place and signifying practice create a "version of reality," what are the ethical implications?
- Can theories of place be used as a method for textual analysis?
- Might theories of place, when used for textual analysis, uncover hidden motives and influences of a text, whether in terms of ontology, epistemology, belief, value, thought, and/or action?
- Can the study of place be used as a method for teaching writing? In other words, how might the social and material conditions that surround and influence discourse become critical aspects to explore in the composing process?

Moving forward, this dissertation will review classic and contemporary theories surrounding place, and the prevailing assumptions surrounding the social/material conditions of a text, and how these outside influences are connected with textual production, language practices, and the "version of reality" we come to know (ibid). Once aware of these diverse theories and assumptions, new space is opened up for approaching historical research, contemporary analysis of texts, and strategies for teaching writing in the classroom—both pedagogically and ethically. The full argument of this dissertation will be clearly outlined after reviewing the literature of place.

* * *

After establishing this clear frame of reference, it is time to survey and parachute—over and into—the topic of "place," starting with how "place" is a composed construct. This presupposition is most notably observed and illustrated by early Pre-Socratic philosophers and the way they grappled with coming to understand the cosmos, and the implications their early beliefs had in understanding humanity's place within the

world, including how they understood knowledge, epistemology, ontology, and larger metaphysical questions.

This initial discussion over early conceptions of the cosmos will establish a baseline for then addressing classic and contemporary theories associated with "place," theories that broadly attempt to unpack the various consequences the social-material conditions of place holds in language practices, human communication, textual production, and broader social-historical implications. This literature review will address a diverse area of research within the discipline of CR, including but not limited to:

Classical Rhetoric

- Sophistic Theories

Contemporary Rhetoric

- Rhetorical Situation
- Material, Visual, and Bodily Rhetoric
- Philosophical Rhetoric
- Environmental Rhetoric

Contemporary Composition Studies

- Composition Studies
- Ecocomposition Studies

Each area and scholar has different assumptions, beliefs, and disciplinary traditions that guide their work. And though a complete survey of the literature is not possible for the current project at hand, a general survey and overview of these different areas is feasible. By exploring each scholar's approach, discerning where theories align and where they

diverge, a fuller picture is gleaned as to how place plays into writing, language practices, and our subject formation within the historical present.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Composed Beliefs and Cosmologies in Pre-Socratic Philosophy

The study of place has held a prominent position in rhetorical and philosophical discussions since the Pre-Socratic Greeks, and as might be expected, has a rich history and tradition. Monism (Thales), Pluralism (Empedocles), and Atomism (Leucippus and Democritus), were different types of philosophies that developed in relation to the world in which these old philosophers lived. They stem from informed beliefs about their surrounding environment, which in turn, influenced the way they thought about epistemology, ontology, and questions of metaphysics. As Douglas J. Soccio writes of this time, "The very first Western thinkers identified as philosophers were initially concerned with questions about the nature of nature (*physis*) and the 'world order' (*kosmos*)" (35). And these questions about the nature of the world, and how the world operates, emerged and evolved in different ways, by different philosophers, and influenced whole schools of thought that made variant deductions based upon these changing presuppositions.

One of the famous seven sages of ancient Greece was Thales of Miletus (c. 624-545 BCE); he has been known as the "first Western philosopher." He is famous for starting the Ionian school of which Socrates was associated (Soccio 35-36). Aristotle referred to Thales as "the founder of natural philosophy" (Barnes 9). Thales is known for many accomplishments and insights, some including the epigraph that was later inscribed upon the temple of Apollo, *know thyself* (Barnes 17), but one of his major

accomplishments is establishing "rational discourse: the use of reason to order, clarify, and identify reality and truth according to agreed-upon standards of verification" (Soccio 36-37). This method for reasoning would allow Thales to discover that the world is singularly made up of one substance, water: "the nutriment of everything is moist, and that . . . the seeds of everything have a moist nature; . . . and that from which everything is generated is always its first principle" (ibid). This philosophical conception of monism became a way of understanding the world, one that is principally made up of—and held together by—water (Soccio 36). Aristotle confirms this belief in *On the Heavens* (294a28-b1): "Some say that [the earth] rests on water. This in fact is the oldest view that has been transmitted to us, and they say that it was advanced by Thales of Miletus who thought that the earth rests because it can float" (qtd. in Barnes 11).

It wasn't long before this theory of the world would be questioned, asking then, what holds the water together that supports the earth? Thales student, Anaximander (611-546 BCE), would answer this question, and extend Thales use of logical reasoning. Anaximander reasoned that the world must be at the center of the universe, "not supported by anything but resting where it is because of its equal distance from everything" (qtd. in Soccio 37). This theory of the material world would lead many pre-Socratic philosophers to see things in material terms, deducing ontological beliefs in terms of the material reality. As Aristotle writes in *On the Soul* (411a7-8): "Some say that [soul] is mixed in the whole universe. Perhaps that is why Thales thought that everything was full of gods" (qtd. in Barnes 12). But this material reality would be transformed by the beliefs of Parmenides, and his emerging thoughts about "being" in relation to reality, as well as the dual nature of truth and opinion.

Moving beyond Thales and Anaximander, it is time to turn to the 5th century BCE philosopher Parmenides and his theory of the cosmos. For Parmenides, no one had yet accounted for the changes that we experience in life, seeing things come into being, seeing things diminish and die, seeing meaning within "the one and the many," and all the ways that change is a natural part of our reality. Within Parmenides view of the world, all reality is a singular form of being; as a result, the material form we take is an illusion to the way of ultimate being that pervades the cosmos. There is one surviving work of Parmenides, a poem that is broken into two parts, the "Way of Truth," which outlines "a correct account of the nature of reality," and a second part, "Way of Opinion," which is "professed a false account and followed the traditional Ionian pattern of works On Nature" (Barnes 77-78). For Parmenides the world is a form of being that is ever-changing, and that our personal material forms creates an illusion of separation, leading to the conclusion that our senses are not to be trusted—creating false truths, or opinions. Parmenides writes, "it is indifferent to me / whence I begin, for there again shall I return" (Barnes 85). Out of this reasoning, the concept of "change" itself is an illusion, and that the world is always whole and complete in-and-of-itself as being (Soccio 40). For Parmenides, the material world is a composed illusion with the phenomenon of an ultimate "being" below the surface—one that a person can achieve only when they see past the false beliefs and opinions they perpetuate in their daily lives.

Another emerging cosmological theory in the 5th century BCE can be seen in Empedocles work. Whereas Thales posited a form of monism through water, Empedocles instantiates a pluralist viewpoint, making a claim that the world is made up of four "root" elements: earth, air, fire, and water—and two great "motions" that perpetuates a cycle of

life: love and strife (Soccio 42). In Empedocles model for the cosmos, there is no One great being, but rather two great forces that brings things together (love), and tears things a part (strife). Life then is a cycle between these two forces, where the soul of humanity is constantly caught and reincarnated within the material conditions of the world. As a result, "Empedocles urges his followers to abstain from all living things; for he says that the bodies of the animals we eat are the dwelling-places of punished souls" (Barnes 115).

Towards the middle of the 5th century BCE, another cosmology would emerge with the work of Leucippus, and his student Democritus. This theory of the world would be encapsulated by the Greek word, "'atomos,' [atomism] meaning 'indivisible,' 'having no parts,' or 'uncuttable'" (Soccio 44). In this cosmology, the universe is a void of emptiness, and that the material reality we experience is made up of little particles (atoms). From this perspective, Soccio writes, "All that exists in this view are atoms and the void—nothing else. There is no intentional order or *purpose* to the universe, though there is *predictability*" (45). Within this cosmology, the world can be understood through the natural properties of motion, where atoms combine and divide in rational ways, even though we can never see atoms with our own eyes.

* * *

So far in this discussion, we have looked at Thales, Anaximander, Parmenides, Empedocles, Leucippus and Democritus' view of the universe, giving independent and rational explanations for how the cosmos came to be, how it operates, and what implications this holds for understanding humanity's place within this construct. Other cosmologies not discussed include: Anaxagoras theory of *Nous* (Greek for 'mind'), which is the belief that a God-like mind pervades the universe, imposing a conscience-like order

within the chaos (Soccio 42); and Heraclitus principled belief in "change" as a universal constant—one that creates a dual view between appearance and reality. Soccio writes, "Heraclitus distinguished between *appearance* and *reality* in a way that contrasted *apparent permanence* with the *hidden reality* of continuous change" (ibid 48).

The reason behind this extended discussion is to illustrate a critical assumption of this dissertation, one that must begin a literature review on the concept of "place," and that is the belief that our understanding of the world/universe/cosmos is a composed idea. As evident by these Pre-Socratic philosophers, there is no shortage in competing ideas about how the world came to be, how it operates, and how we should understand our place within this reality. One might be tempted to say that we no longer participate in these types of discussions today—that was then and this is now—but that idea is simply not true. Ardent proponents in variant segments of society continually debate and argue about claims over the "Big Bang," "Creationism," "Multiverse," and "String Theory" bridging the inconsistencies between "Quantum Mechanics" and "General Relativity." As Thomas Kuhn and other science historians have articulated, we are constantly revising our conceptions of the universe, with new insights and beliefs creating new frameworks and paradigms for human understanding. Kuhn writes:

> Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before. It is rather as if the professional community had been suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light and joined by unfamiliar ones as well. (111)

Because of this fact, the history and review of these Pre-Socratic cosmologies retain salience today and illustrate important implications that differing worldviews can have when approaching questions about humanity's place in the universe—especially when connected with competing ideologies, values, and beliefs.

As evident by the Pre-Socratic philosophers, there are consequences to the way we make sense and compose our reality, whether having to position the world at the center of the universe to reconcile what keeps the water in place in holding up the earth (Anaximander), or advocating vegetarianism based upon the belief that the souls of humans are reincarnated through the lives of animals (Empedocles). These composed constructs of place create a discursive framework. And these frameworks are not innocuous, but are representative to the ways that discourse shapes our worldview and simultaneously influence how we understand knowledge, epistemology, ontology, and all other aspects of our lives. As Berlin highlights earlier with the assumptions of SER, language practices reflect "subject formation within the framework of economic, social, and political conditions" (83). But more than this, subject formation is simultaneously influenced and positioned by the social-material conditions of a composed worldview and place. The critical questions then become how? Why? In what way is this influence seen?

Contemporary scholarship in composition and rhetoric is beginning to address these questions about the influence the social-material conditions have upon communication and language practices. Some of the scholarship aligns, some diverge, and some approach the topic in completely novel ways. A complete survey of the literature is not possible, but a general picture can be seen in how different scholars

across the field, and at various times within the discipline, have looked at, analyzed, and theorized the influence of place.

Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Theories of Place

Since the early 1990s, scholars in composition and rhetoric have spent considerable effort reviving and rereading the contributions made by the sophists of the early 5th and 4th century BCE. Bruce McComiskey captures this trend when he writes in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* (1994), "Sophistic doctrines are being exhumed and revived for contemporary purposes more now than ever before" (16). Susan C. Jarratt's work, *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured* (1991) is a good example of this fact. But the sophists of this time period have been a topic of discussion by classic historians for a good part of the 20th century—even up until present day, including George Kennedy's *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (1963), W.K.C. Guthrie's *The Sophists* (1971), G.B. Kerferd's *The Sophistic Movement* (1981), and Edward Schiappa's recent *Protagoras and Logos* (2003). Many connect the revival of the sophist's lasting influence to G.W.F. Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (1832)—with Jarratt going so far to say that "Hegel rescued the sophists from obscurity" (4), and Schiappa writing that Hegel "returned the Sophists to philosophical significance" (8).

This time period in ancient Greece is significant for multiple reasons. During this time, historians have identified clear changes in thought, intellectual advancement, and literacy—moving from a primarily oral and mythic culture, to one that explored advances in writing and prose inquiry that questioned presumed theistic beliefs. These findings are thoroughly explored and outlined in Walter J. Ong's *Orality and Literacy* (1982) and Eric A. Havelock's *The Muse Learns to Write* (1986). But more than this changing form of

literacy, the sophist's developed elaborate theories that challenged notions of knowledge, truth, and ontology.

One emerging theory of the time involves looking at the material and social conditions of an environment, and how one understands place. This emerging theory is isolated around two key terms, nomos and physis. Kerferd writes,

> It has long been recognized that two terms, *nomos* and *physis*, were of great importance in much of the thinking and arguments in the second half of the fifth century B.C. The term physis is usually translated by 'nature'. It was the term which the Ionian scientists came to use for the whole of reality, or for its most abiding material source or constituents. (111)

As Kerferd writes, physis was a term that referred to the materiality of nature, the physical surroundings of a place. In contrast to the material conditions of a place, nomos was a term that looked at the social constructs, beliefs, and "norms" associated with a particular place. Kerferd writes, "[t]he nearest modern term for *nomos* is 'norm' – the establishment or promulgation of *nomoi* is the setting up of norms of behavior" (112).

Though the theory involved with these two terms lacks a certain amount of complexity, its simplicity is a hatchet that cuts clear lines between established ideas about the physical/material world, and the social constructs—political, religious, ideological and so forth—we compose in relation to our surrounding environment. The consideration of these two terms provided a theoretical way for discerning the differences in the social, political, and religious practices between city-states and regional territories of the ancient world. They provided a rational way for explaining the sometimes-drastic differences between the Athenians, the Spartans, the Corinthians, and others.

The result of this theoretical perspective had consequences in the way sophists began to consider social, religious, and political practices, and epistemic beliefs rooted in theistic ideas, pushing questions that began to erode the mythic beliefs that provided a framework for understanding the world. The simple division and separation between the material and the social exposed the sophists to understand how knowledge, truth, and belief are entwined between these two forces—opening up further discussions over epistemology, ontology, and metaphysical questions. One might say that this radical theoretical perspective helped propel other sophistic theories of doxa, apate, and logos. More on this will be explored later in the dissertation.

Contemporary Rhetoric: The Rhetorical Situation

Looking at contemporary rhetoric, there is a critical debate that emerges in the late 1960s and early 1970s that addresses the importance that place holds in studying rhetoric. This debate establishes a kind of "background" to later rhetorical scholarship to the importance of setting—and the material conditions present—within the study of rhetorical acts. As a result, this debate is a good place to begin before addressing more current areas of research in the study of place within contemporary rhetorical scholarship.

The debate begins with Lloyd Bitzer's 1968 article, "The Rhetorical Situation," published in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* journal. A key point Bitzer makes is that "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action" (4). In the article, Bitzer highlights the importance that "situations" present as a function for rhetoric (or "rhetorical discourse") to operate within—a view that bounds rhetoric to a particular moment in time that requires some type of "exigence," "audience," and

"constraints" surrounding the rhetor's ability to persuade an audience (6). For Bitzer, specific conditions of the world create a space for rhetoric to operate within.

Richard E. Vatz's 1973 article, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," counter's Bitzer's perspective by emphasizing how the rhetor is responsible for creating situations: "meaning is not discovered in situations, but *created* by rhetors" (157). For Vatz, a rhetor's discourse plays the driving force in how rhetorical situations are created, and not the other way around. He writes:

> If you view meaning as intrinsic to situations, rhetorical study becomes parasitic to philosophy, political science, and whatever other discipline can inform us as to what the 'real' situation is. If, on the other hand, you view meaning as a consequence of rhetorical creation, your paramount concern will be how and by whom symbols create the reality to which people react. (158)

It is here we see the difference between Bitzer and Vatz being tantamount to an emphatic divide on how "rhetoric" operates between the conditions of a particular social setting, versus a rhetor's ability to use discourse to determine what that social setting signifies. For Bitzer, rhetoric is grounded within the specific social conditions that establish his conception of the "rhetorical situation." For Vatz, rhetoric is not so much grounded by the material conditions of a situation, but rather by the rhetor's use of discourse to create "situations" and influence "the reality to which people react" (ibid).

By 1974, Scott Consigny publishes an article that attempts to bridge these two divided perspectives through a focused analysis of "commonplace" and "topic" as essential components to a rhetor's discourse within a given "situation." He writes,

> The topic is thus construed as an essential *instrument* for discovery or invention. But the topic has a second important role in the theory of rhetoric: that is the function of topic as a *realm* in which the rhetor thinks and acts. In this second sense, the "place" of the rhetor is that region or field marked by the particularities of persons, acts, and agencies in which the rhetor discloses and establishes meaningful relationships. The topic is a location or site, the Latin *situs*, from which we derive our term "situation." (182)

It is interesting to see how Consigny bridges Bitzer and Vatz perspective through the category of topic as a discursive function in rhetorical theory. The topic is localized by the rhetor within the historical moment and the social "realm" in which the rhetor is constrained by. As a result, the social and material conditions of the situation does influence the rhetorical act in question (as Bitzer argues), but it is also fair to say that the rhetor's discourse, and choice in "topics," influences how the rhetorical situation is created, constructed, and/or construed (as Vatz argues).

There are a couple important points to highlight here. First is how the debate between Bitzer and Vatz calls attention to questioning/analyzing the relationship between a rhetor, the situation, and the rhetoric act. Though Bitzer and Vatz call attention and emphasize different aspects of the relationship, whether placing more importance to the social material conditions of the situation or the rhetor's choice in words, both agree to the importance that the discourse holds within understanding rhetorical acts. Consigny builds on this agreement, and puts forward a special emphasis on the rhetorical category of "topic," to articulate how discourse is situated by the historical moment and social

conditions of the rhetor, but that the rhetor still chooses within these constraints in a way that shapes how the situation unfolds.

This debate and focused attention for discerning how to understand the "rhetorical situation" would later influence other evolving theories of rhetoric, especially with how the social and material conditions influence textual production, language practices, as well as epistemic and ontological systems of thought.

* * *

Moving past this debate, a review of contemporary rhetoric shows some major areas of development when looking at the social and material conditions of place. These areas of scholarship include:

- Material, Visual, and Bodily Rhetoric
- Philosophical Rhetoric
- Environmental Rhetoric

As mentioned earlier, a complete review of the literature is impossible, but a general picture can still be seen when looking at how contemporary rhetorical theory addresses the influence that place holds.

Material, Visual, and Bodily Rhetoric

The three terms listed within the subheading above (material, visual, and bodily) are critical terms that, in many ways, are individual areas of study within contemporary rhetorical studies—areas that are quite expansive in the extent of research currently underway. As a result, this review will be fairly limited in scope. That being said, the goal is to expose the reader to shifting presuppositions, evolving theories, and emerging methodologies of research practices associated with place.

In Kristie S. Fleckenstein's introductory chapter to *Ways of Seeing, Ways of Speaking: The Integration of Rhetoric and Vision in Constructing the Real*, she makes a strong argument that "rhetoric is always material" (11). In her view of the discipline, the material conditions of the world always grounds rhetoric, in that our physical environment is a pervasive element that informs how we understand our experiences and how we communicate what we know about the world. She defines this perspective:

> [*M*]*aterial rhetorics* refers to those discourses specifically designed to shape, identify, analyze, and validate aspects of our lived reality. Material rhetorics persuade our realities into existence. They testify to community members that the world is configured in one way and not another; by so doing, they weld those members into a community" (11)

Immediately from this perspective, one can see presuppositions being made by Fleckenstein. First is the idea that our reality is something that is "persuaded . . . into existence" (ibid); in other words, our world is something that is constructed. And it is constructed through "discourse" that in her words "shape, identify, analyze, and validate aspects of our lived reality" (ibid). But more than this, Fleckenstein makes an important point that this constructed version of reality is only meaningful when shared by a community of members—that the shared belief reinforces communal membership.

Many of these assumptions are shared by this dissertation. What makes Fleckenstein's work standout is how she extends discourse to include visual elements in the way our reality is composed. She writes,

> Central to our definition of material rhetorics is a reliance on nonlinguistic elements in those rhetorics, specifically vision. Performances of material

> rhetoric are comprised of imagery and ways of seeing as well as of language. Shared symbol systems, not just language systems, are involved in constructing the real. (11)

The visual then becomes an important way in which Fleckenstein grounds her material rhetoric, instantiating the view that "the constitution of our world and our identities [are] composed of the intricate interweaving of word, image, and shared ways of seeing" (6).

Beyond Fleckenstein's introductory chapter, the work is filled with different essays that illustrate how this positioned view of rhetoric allows for a new methodology in visual hermeneutics representative by digital coding (Ihde 33), historical analysis of evolving scientific visualizations, and how these visualizations influenced ways of knowing (Gross 52), and contemporary analysis of a "racialized gaze,"[2] and its cultural implications of "authenticity and universality in Disney's *Mulan*" (Hum 107). In each essay, one discovers how different nonlinguistic images (visual or symbolic), become objects of analysis that illustrate how different discourse practices—whether in digital coding, scientific literature, or pop culture films—can influence a constructed, shared, communal worldviews.[3]

* * *

In many ways, the study of bodily rhetorics is closely aligned with material and visual rhetorics, in that it explores how the materiality of the "body" can be a site of conflict, visually inscribed by discourse—whether social, political, and/or ideological. Much of this area of scholarship has been established and informed by feminist theorists such as Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), and Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993). These critical feminist texts have informed

seminal works in CR that includes Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley's edited volume, *Rhetorical Bodies* (1999), Kristie S. Fleckenstein's *Embodied Literacies* (2003), and Debra Hawhee's *Bodily Arts* (2004). In Hawhee's work, she writes about the importance that certain scholars have brought to "body studies," writing that:

> These thinkers [such as Butler, Foucault, Bourdieu and Grosz] and others write about the body as a site of torture, affective formation, gender formation, and disciplinary production to consider more precisely the ways in which bodies are bound up with power, identity practices, and learning—in short, the ways in which, to borrow a phrase from Butler, bodies *matter* for philosophical, feminist, even historical inquiry. (10)

Even though this area of scholarship is specifically rooted around studying the body as opposed to place, the theories associated around how the body is constructed through discourse reflects similar ways in which place is constructed through discourse. And as Sharon Crowley writes at the end of *Rhetorical Bodies*, in an afterword entitled "The Material of Rhetoric":

> From my point of view, one of the most important contributions to rhetorical studies of analyses like these is that they point up the interestedness of boundary-drawing and distinction-making. Distinctions and boundaries are never disinterested: when someone is named as a witch, a factory worker, a rustic, or an illiterate, someone else profits from that distinction. When images are distinguished from texts, someone profits. What I learn from these chapters is that no body is disinterested. (363)

In this way, theories associated with body studies help expose how boundaries are drawn between one another, and how discourse is used to inscribe these divisions—leaving one to question and analyze where, why, for what reason, and by whom?

Philosophical Rhetoric

The philosophical rhetoric connected with place is a rich and complicated area—one that could easily become the entire focus of this dissertation. As one dives into the literature, one is immediately caught up and forced to untangle a deeply divided discipline in philosophy, and trace how contemporary rhetoric is adapting scholarship advanced and rooted in different ways from Continental and/or Analytic lineages. Many of the intricacies between these two schools of thought are beyond my knowledge base; I mention this with the realization that careful attention should be paid when mixing, combining, or aligning different philosophical precepts and ideas for rhetorical purposes and scholarship. That being said, contemporary scholars in rhetoric have been able to weave diverse philosophical precepts in ways that provide compelling perspectives to language practices in rhetoric.

For this dissertation, there are three contemporary texts I will limit this discussion to, including Thomas Kent's *Paralogic Rhetoric* (1993), Barbara Couture's *Toward a Phenomenological Rhetoric* (1998), and Thomas Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric* (2013).[4] Each of these works illustrate philosophical approaches to analyzing the space and place around language practices in intriguing ways—ways that illustrate different theoretical and methodological approaches to discerning how external social and material conditions play into communication and textual production.

I begin with Kent's *Paralogic Rhetoric* because it represents, perhaps, the most contentious approach to understanding the contextual aspects of communication and language practices of the three. His work is contentious by the fact that it attempts to redress the assumption that language and discourse is a socially codified system that can accurately bridge the communicative divide between subjects—that language, and the study of language, can help us understand each other, and the meaning within the communicative act. As he writes, "I no longer accept this formulation of discourse production and reception, and, in the following pages, I attempt to outline an alternative" (x). This alternative is rooted in the term "paralogy." He writes:

> Paralogy is the feature of language-in-use that accounts for successful communicative interaction. More specifically, paralogy refers to the uncodifiable moves we make when we communicate with others, and ontologically, the term describes the unpredictable, elusive, and tenuous decisions or strategies we employ when we actually put language to use. (3)

In other words, communicative acts are not sites that can be grounded by language as some type of socially codified form of discourse, but rather by the *use* of language that allows one to achieve a successful outcome. From this perspective, all texts and communicative acts are analogous to a Robin Williams' routine, improvised and impromptu, leaving the reader, the listener, the audience to interpret in the moment, the "unpredictable, elusive, and tenuous" meanings in the change of voice, tone, physical display—and all the other sub- and contextual elements that bring meaning to life in the act of language-in-use. As a result, Kent writes, "language does not make social

interaction possible; social interaction makes language possible" (13). This phenomenon exists right under our nose. He writes:

> In everyday communicative interaction, these guesses are highly accurate because we share so much life experience. In fact, in ordinary conversation, for example, our guesses are so highly accurate that we do not realize that we are guessing at all. The point, however, still stands. Whenever we communicate, we engage in a hermeneutic guessing game that may go unnoticed but, nonetheless, still exists. (15)

Once aware of this constant interpretive dance of sorts, the assuredness in our assumptions about language being a firm bridge between each other and the world at large quickly breaks down, and forces one to consider the elements working from outside the unstable framework of language and discourse.

Kent roots this perspective in the work of Nietzsche, Dewey, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein. After reviewing each philosopher's work, he presents his perspective as aligned with contemporary philosopher Donald Davidson. In its most basic presentation, Kent writes:

> Stated in a most rudimentary way, Davidson argues that (1) communicative interaction is a thoroughly hermeneutic act, and (2) this hermeneutic act cannot be converted into a logical framework or system of social conventions that determines the meaning of our utterances. Because we always engage in interpretation when we generate and decipher utterances and because this act of interpretation cannot be reduced to a framework of normative conventions or to a logico-systemic—and

> therefore predictable—process, I call this alternative conception of communicative interaction *paralogic hermeneutics*. (x)

This theory of paralogy, and paralogic hermeneutics, is significant in its ability to open our eyes to seeing outside the box of language. It presents a way of understanding the rhetorical act of communication—specifically in regards to the space surrounding these acts of communication and textual production. He writes, "a paralogic hermeneutics requires us to relinquish the idea that language possess a firm anchor in the world" (52). As a result, the social material conditions surrounding an act are important contextual cues—or paralogic forces—in the production and reception of a text—and that "meaning" is made in use, and always hermeneutically understood (or guessed at) by the one interpreting the act or text.

* * *

Whereas Kent's work focuses on the factors outside of language, Barbara Couture's work, *Toward a Phenomenological Rhetoric*, makes an argument that narrows attention to the role of language and writing in particular—specifically in its ability to help us know each other, the world, and our conceptions of "truth." In her words:

> In this book, I attempt to reconcile the aims of writing and truth seeking through providing an alternative to these constraining philosophies. To accomplish this aim, I propose a phenomenological rhetoric of writing, one that interprets writing as an activity integral with our conceptions of ourselves and others as purposeful beings. In short, I defend and explain writing as a practice that develops truth and value in human experience. (3)

Part of Couture's approach involves reinterpreting phenomenology so as to address contemporary critiques by Jacques Derrida, Kathleen Haney, and Paul Ricoeur (4 – 5), and in her reinterpretation she makes the following claims: "(1) all essences or truths are located in subjective experience; (2) truth is an outcome of intersubjective understanding; and (3) intersubjective understanding progresses toward truth through writing" (4). In this reconceptualization, Couture makes a sophistic argument that positions her theory of truth as a communal activity (through the intersubjective self), which is then instantiated through writing. This then is the "phenomenology" in which truth becomes expressed. And in service of this end, Couture highlights how "altruism," and notions of "profession" (99), can be ideals (or tropes[5]) within rhetorical practice, so as to be in service of facilitating a phenomenology of truth seeking: "In practicing rhetoric as altruistic profession, writers can enact a phenomenological approach to truth seeking within the tradition of rhetoric as persuasion" (6).

Though heavily focused on adapting phenomenology for re-envisioning rhetoric as an activity for reclaiming truth in the face of contemporary biases of relativism, Couture's work does make an important argument that aligns with Fleckenstein's position of material rhetoric, in that the world is configured, validated, and affirmed through the communal (as made up of intersubjective beings). But more than this, Couture opens a space for scholars to consider how this activity, under certain conditions, can indeed be considered to constitute "truth"—or at the very least, a "truth" that operates in service of understanding each other, and the broader world at large—and not simply a *relative* fiction.

* * *

Thomas Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric* is an ambitious work that attempts to show how rhetoric is not just involved with knowledge and epistemology (i.e. rhetoric as epistemic), but that it is also steeped in being and ontology. Rickert writes:

> In conceiving rhetoric as ontological, then, I engage with questions concerning not just how human beings generate and negotiate knowledge, how rhetoric reflects conceptions of human sociality, or how rhetoric advances life but how human beings and the world *are*. (xv)

It is important to mention this upfront to illustrate how Rickert is not just outlining a theoretical approach for discerning place, or ways in which we know the world through language, but that his goal is to carve out a new space in rhetoric, one that accounts for "ambience" as a way of understanding ontology *within* and *of* the world—a discursive framework by which to see the implications in the interconnectedness all around us. In some ways, Rickert's project is analogous to Parmenides' work—in that of conceiving *being* as all encompassing. Rickert constructs an argument that sees the material world as pervasive in its influence of "being," so much so that our ordinary perceptions are blind to this influence, but that through careful thought, one might be able to perceive and gain knowledge in the rich complexity of our interconnectedness with the world. Rhetoric, then, becomes the vehicle for achieving this understanding. He writes:

> Rhetoric accomplishes its work by inducing us to shift, at least potentially, how we dwell or see ourselves dwelling in the world. Rhetoric does not just change subjective states of mind; it transforms our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world, how we dwell. I use the term *dwelling* here to mean how people come together to flourish (or try to

> flourish) in a place, or better, how they come together in the continual making of a place; at the same time, that place is interwoven into the way they have come to be as they are—and as further disclosed through their dwelling practices. (xiii)

This notion of "dwelling," as Rickert later outlines, is informed from Heidegger's use of the term, as well as other precepts[6]. A critical part of this passage is discerning how Rickert positions rhetoric as a comprehensive framework for *being* within and of the world, a framework that accounts for the way in which people participate within a place, and the way place participates with people—a sort of self-reflexive, immersive rhetoric retaining conscientious awareness to the way we influence and are simultaneously influenced by our surroundings. The material condition of the world is integral to Rickert's position, and aligns with much of the scholarship in material rhetorics.

Some of the key tropes to Rickert's work include "ambience" (5), "attunement" (8), and "terroir" (271). These metaphors become theoretical terms that underpin Rickert's approach to unpacking what an ontological rhetoric looks like, and how they expose interconnections to our surrounding environment. Much of Rickert's work provides a compelling perspective to looking at how place can inform what it means to *be*, ontologically speaking.

Environmental Rhetoric

Moving beyond the philosophical, there is a strong area of scholarship in rhetoric that looks at place through environmental studies and activism. A critical work in this area is M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer's *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America* (1992). This work presents a thorough overview to the

field of environmental rhetoric, helping the reader navigate through the many areas (or camps) associated with environmental issues, whether regarding biases, assumptions, and motivational forces. Killingsworth and Palmer make a strong case for organizing this field through a horseshoe configuration (like a bent spectrum) where individual camps are located broadly by assumptions about nature, whether seeing "nature as object," "nature as resource," and/or "nature as spirit" (14). They write of this as a "continuum whose poles designate three human attitudes toward the natural world" (11). Pending these three attitudes, Killingsworth and Palmer are able to discern individual camps/organizations/disciplines along this continuum, whether placing "traditional science" by *nature as object*, "business/industry" and "agriculture" by *nature as resource*, and "social ecology" and "deep ecology" by *nature as spirit* (14).

The value in discerning these different areas, and the broad assumptions these areas inherently maintain about nature, generate greater awareness for the diverse motivational forces connected with environmental studies. And even though this dissertation is not positioned for environmental studies and activism, Killingsworth and Palmer's work presents a compelling argument for reflecting upon how "place," as environment, might be discerned through this continuum of the "three human attitudes toward the natural world" (ibid).

Contemporary Composition Studies Involving Place

As discussed earlier, Berlin's theories of SER in contemporary composition studies situate much of this dissertation. But there are other areas within composition studies that are indirectly informed and influenced by the social and material conditions of place—areas that have not traditionally been read in light of place. By reviewing from this

perspective, greater awareness is gleaned as to how pervasive place is to composition studies, both in terms of process, practice, and more.

In 1981, Linda Flower and John R. Hayes published, "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing" in *College Composition and Communication* journal. They open the article with reference to the debate over the "rhetorical situation" between Bitzer and Vatz, doing so in a way that pays homage to the rhetorical situation as a kind of "given" to acts of composing, but pressing the question, "What guides the decisions writers make as they write?" (365). This question sets the stage for their research in exploring the cognitive processes involved with writers, as they write. Though the focus of the research is looking at the cognitive choices writers make when they write, their cognitive process model retains a direct relationship between the "task environment" (the physical/social conditions of writing) and the "writing process" (as a series of internal choices made by the writer). Much of the "task environment" is connected with Bitzer's model for the rhetorical situation, with consideration to "topic," "audience," and "exigency;" as they write, "[t]he task environment includes all of those things outside the writer's skin" (369). And though the social context surrounding this cognitive model for understanding composition is limited in scope and discussion, much of this model would later be drastically revised and reconsidered by the work of Patricia Bizzell—especially in regards to the social conditions of the writing process.

In 1982, Patricia Bizzell published "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty: What We Need to Know about Writing," in the journal *PRE/TEXT*. Much of this article is a direct redress (or critique) to the work accomplished by Flower and Hayes. In Bizzell's article, she amends what she sees as an "inner-directed" theory of language and thought

development, where theorists, such as Flower and Hayes, have assumed that individuals move from experience, to society, to writing situations (qtd. in *Cross-Talk* 389). This linear form of thinking creates the false illusions that writing situations can be universally understood through the thought process of the individual—hence, phrased as an "inner-directed" model. Much of Bizzell's critique is to expose how language and thought development is facilitated by a fluid, dynamic, and heterogeneous series of discourse communities that our students participate within, and are limited by. This then, generally, is the "outer-directed" theoretical approach to understanding language and thought development. Bizzell writes:

> In contrast, outer-directed theorists believe that universal, fundamental structures can't be taught; thinking and language use can never occur free of a social context that conditions them. . . .What we should do is to teach students that there are such things as discourse conventions. (qtd. in *Cross-Talk* 390)

Bizzell goes on to show how this understanding can help "shore up the Flower-Hayes model" (395) by calling attention to the social and historical conditions our students are challenged with in the writing process, making a call for increased awareness of the different conventions associated with different discourse communities. Towards the end of the article, Bizzell writes:

> If we call what we are teaching 'universal' structures or processes, we bury the hidden curriculum even deeper by claiming that our choice of material owes nothing to historical circumstances. To do this is to deny the school's function as an agent of cultural hegemony, or the selective

> valuation and transmission of world views. The result for students who don't share the school's preferred world views is either failure or deracination. (qtd. in *Cross-Talk* 407)

It is here where one discovers the larger implications for considering the social and historical conditions surrounding writing instruction. And although "place" is not the primary focus of Bizzell's work, the social material conditions and historical context that students face—with the varied worldviews and language practices students experience—are critical aspects of Bizzell's work. Much of this can be seen as framed through a cultural analysis of composition pedagogy—an almost precursor to Mary Louise Pratt's theory of the "contact zone" of the early 1990s. That said, Bizzell's work, and her call for greater attention to the social and historical conditions that students face, lend itself for further extension and elaboration into the influence that place holds in the actual *process* of composing a text. This debate about the process of writing would later be complicated by a critical debate about the practice and approach of teaching composition at the university.

* * *

Another critical debate in composition studies that has not traditionally been read in light of place—but one where place plays a factor—is the debate between David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow. Whereas the debate between Flower and Hayes, and Bizzell concerned the *process* involved with composing, the debate between Bartholomae and Elbow involves the *practice* involved with teaching composition at the university, pedagogically speaking. Indeed, this debate begins with Bartholomae's 1986 article, "Inventing the University," where he opens with the idea,

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion—invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowledge, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourses of our community. (4)

Here one sees a clear call for recognizing the unique aspects surrounding writing practices within the "university" setting, what Bartholomae calls "peculiar ways" of writing our students are required to develop in order to gain participation within the "discourse of our community" (ibid). The *university* then becomes a critical space to consider when *teaching* writing. In the article, Bartholomae builds off the work that Bizzell achieves in her response to Flower and Hayes ("Cognition, Convention, and Certainty"), doing so by emphasizing Bizzell's argument for demystifying the conventions associated with specialized discourse communities (12); in this case, the conventions of academic writing within the university setting.

For Elbow, the argument that Bartholomae makes is constricting in its scope for teaching composition. Elbow calls into question the fact that instructors of composition should consider our students as writers who will write well beyond the halls of academia, so that the practice of teaching writing should involve close attention to helping students become "writers" as opposed to mere "academics."[7] In many ways, Elbow pivots the debate away from the practical concerns with teaching composition in a way that helps students merely learn the conventions of academic writing, and situates the debate as a matter of helping students more broadly and personally, as writers. From this approach,

the classroom becomes a central space that can be nurtured for students to discover their own voice, their own thoughts, and make their own choices when it comes to writing. In this way, students learn to be writers for the rest of their lives, both during their time within the *university* and *outside* of it.

Much of this position is outlined in a *CCC* article, "Being a Writer vs. Being an Academic: A Conflict of Goals" (1995). Elbow writes:

> Have you ever noticed that when we write articles or books as academics, we often have the same feeling that students have when they turn in papers: "Is this okay? Will you accept this?" But damn it, I want my first year students to be saying in their writing, "Listen to me, I have something to tell you" not "Is this okay? Will you accept this?" (82)

Whereas Bartholomae argues from a position of practical consideration for helping students be successful at the university, Elbow sees teaching composition as a means of helping students become successful writers in general—and not *just* successful academics. In much of the article, Elbow attempts to outline specific points about classroom practices that may help dispel the conflict. Towards the end of the article, Elbow writes:

> Perhaps my categories are over simple [sic], but I confess I'm talking also about my own experience. I'm proud of being both an academic and a writer, partly because I've had to struggle on both counts. I'd like to inhabit both roles in an unconflicted way, but I feel a tug of war between them. (82)

This final point by Elbow reflects a middle ground that is informative for teachers of first year composition, and one that meets Bartholomae halfway in this debate. Helping students learn the conventions of academic writing is important, but it is also important to help students become successful as writers in general, and maybe by approaching both practices in the classroom, we can help our students "inhabit both roles in an unconflicted way" (ibid).

* * *

So far, place has maintained an influence in contemporary debates regarding the *process* of composing, and the *practice* of teaching composition. It is also important to highlight that place has become an increasingly relevant aspect for composition studies in-and-of itself. Works such as Nedra Reynolds *Geographies of Writing* (2004) look at place as a complex area that can inform not only teaching composition, but also approaches for researching literacy, political action, cultural differences and identity formation. It should be mentioned up front that her theories surrounding place is informed from her work with the geography department at the University of Leeds in Yorkshire, Great Britain. This experience with geography majors—along with theories of "realandimagined" space (Edward Soja) and geographies of exclusion (David Sibley)—led Reynolds to question the implications these experiences and theories had for composition studies. She writes in the introduction:

> My effort in this book, then, is to illustrate how geography contributes, metaphorically and methodologically, to literacy practices, to conceptions of discourse, and to postmodern composition theory attentive to differences, the material, and the visual. The language and practices of

> cultural geography help me to make the case for a better understanding of paradoxical space and contested places; . . . all of which suggest ways to rethink spatial metaphors, to re-imagine acts of writing, and to attend to the politics of space as they intersect with teaching and research practices. (7)

A significant aspect of the work exposes how our conceptions surrounding our environment are composed ideas. Her work illustrates a direct approach with encountering the outside world, and pulling it into the classroom so as to question "contested spaces" (93), and "no-go areas" (101) in the community that are considered dangerous, or places of desire (104) and why they are considered desirable. Her work exemplifies how composition studies can be informed by geography, and how place is a rich area for study and inquiry. And just as geography was an influential factor in Reynolds work, the science of ecology would be influential in contributing to another area of study dedicated to analyzing place in composition studies.

Ecocomposition: Discourse and the Natural World

Ecocomposition has emerged as a relatively new field of research in composition studies in the last 15 years. At the 1998 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Chicago, a panel made of Randall Roorda, Lee Smith, and Michael McDowell, is noted for first presenting and coining the term "ecocomposition" (Dobrin and Weisser 7). A short time later, in 2001, *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches* is published with a series of essays that looks at how the science of ecology and systems inform composition studies, both in terms of research and

teaching practices. In the introduction, Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin writes of ecocomposition as:

> [A]n area of study which, at its core, places ecological thinking and composition in dialogue with one another in order to both consider the ecological properties of written discourse and the ways in which ecologies, environments, locations, places, and natures are discursively affected. That is to say, ecocomposition is about relationships; it is about the coconstitutive existence of writing and environment; it is about physical environment and constructed environment; it is about the production of written discourse and the relationship of that discourse to the places it encounters. (2)

In many ways this early work, with its diverse range of essays, illustrates an initial attempt at grappling with the rich possibilities that ecology, and theories associated with place and environment, hold for contemplating issues in composition studies—whether regarding literacy, pedagogy, service learning, genre studies, and more.

In the work, one can see an initial definition emerging as to what ecocomposition espouses when looking at the relationship between written discourse and the environment—seeing an inherent relationship between the two in ways that inform textual production and textual analysis. By 2002, Dobrin and Weisser would extend this definition and theoretical analysis in their own work, entitled *Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*—a work that is seminal, not only in regarding the recent history surrounding ecocomposition, but also in outlining its full range of possibilities in composition studies.

In the opening foreword, Edward M. White writes that "Ecocomposition seeks to change the way we think about writing, and hence the way we think about the world we live in. For this is a book about rhetoric and deep theory of composition as much as it is about the natural environment" (ix). In some ways, the work achieves this claim by White, envisioning a new way of thinking about writing and its relationship with the world; but in some ways, ecocomposition aligns nicely with previous research stances and practices in contemporary rhetoric and composition studies.

Like the New Rhetoric's active embrace and inclusive stance towards diverse rhetorics (or language practices), ecocomposition actively embraces a diverse range of disciplines in order to study the nuances that exist in the relationship between human discourse and the natural world. This is most readily seen in Dobrin and Weisser's definition of ecocomposition:

> Ecocomposition is the study of the relationships between environments (and by that we mean natural, constructed, and even imagined places) and discourse (speaking, writing, and thinking). Ecocomposition draws primarily from disciplines that study discourse (chiefly composition, but also including literary studies, communication, cultural studies, linguistics, and philosophy) and merges the perspectives of them with work in disciplines that examine environment (these include ecology, environmental studies, sociobiology, and other "hard" sciences). As a result, ecocomposition attempts to provide a more holistic, encompassing framework for studies of the relationship between discourse and environment. (6)

This definition is fairly broad, but thorough in its way of capturing how ecocomposition positions itself as an emerging form of research. It is concerned with the relationship between the environment and human discourse. It is interdisciplinary and embraces multiple perspectives. It sees science as not antithetical to research in the social sciences, but rather a partner in understanding the larger implications of the human condition. Later in the introduction, Dobrin and Weisser write: "Etymologically *ecocomposition* reflects *ecology*, a science that evolved specifically to study the relationships between organisms and their surrounding environment" (9).

It is interesting to note that by studying the relationship that exists between humans and the natural world, ecocomposition aligns itself nicely with Berlin's theory of SER. Although Berlin's theory of SER attempts to understand "subject formation within the framework of economic, social, and political conditions" (83), ecocomposition actively studies subject formation within the framework of the natural world—and the inherent relationship that exists between the social and material conditions surrounding discourse, whether in its use, its representations, and/or its constructions.

Seeing the Common Ground: Surveying the Literature

The literature surrounding the social and material conditions of place, and its influence regarding language practice, discourse, textual production, analysis, and teaching practices, is extensive, varied, and disparate in many ways. But there is also common ground in these diverse theories that inform how this dissertation will proceed. Before moving forward, it is important to explore the ways that these diverse theories establish baseline assumptions and presuppositions that inform the proceeding chapters to come.

Like the New Rhetoric movement, this dissertation believes that knowledge is crafted, shaped, and recorded through language—knowing that language makes knowledge possible in giving it form. As Berlin writes, "Language . . . embodies and generates knowledge, and there is no knowledge without language" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 167). Similarly, individual language practices reflect individual "rhetorics" that can be studied within the broader inclusive discipline of rhetoric. And as Berlin makes clear in SER, these individual language practices in everyday life operate as discursive frameworks that influence subject formation through economic, political, ideological, social, and material forces. And these forces are historically situated and present in the discourse used and acted upon.

Although Berlin focuses much of his analysis on the political, ideological, and economic conditions that influence these discursive frameworks, recent and historic theories of place in rhetoric and composition studies provide available means to extend Berlin's SER so as to analyze, dissect, and understand the social and material forces that influence language practice, textual production, textual analysis, subject formation, and teaching practices.

The debate between Bitzer and Vatz illustrates how rhetorical acts (including texts) are situated in the historic moment and conditions in which it is composed. Both scholars agree that the discourse used in these rhetorical acts influence how the situation is defined, constructed, and/or construed. Consigny exposes how this connection is made possible—illustrating that the rhetor, in the act of composing, is drawing upon topics and commonplaces that are available only within the historical conditions present at the time of its construction.

Similarly, the 5th century BCE Sophists provide a clear method for discerning the influence between socially constructed beliefs (nomos) and aspects of the known world (physis) constructed by a text or person within the historic conditions at the time of its construction. This theory—considered in conjunction with the Pre-Socratic's diverse array of cosmologies, and science historian Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigm shifts—present clear lines for seeing how our worldview is composed through language, and that this composed worldview can be dissected, analyzed, and understand through the discourse made available.

In recent developments with material, visual, and bodily rhetorics, one sees how the influence of the social and material goes beyond the language of a text. The work of scholars such as Fleckenstein, Seltzer, Crowley, and Hawhee, illustrate how the social and material conditions of a particular historic moment can be seen and analyzed through nontraditional texts and artifacts. These visual and embodied texts are extended representations of how discursive frameworks can influence subject formation. Their work calls into question how assumptions about the world are enacted and perpetuated through diverse representations that reinforce a particular worldview—one that is instantiated again and again when communities of members "validate" this "lived reality" (Fleckenstein 11).

Just as Fleckenstein outlines the importance that shared knowledge and experience provides in creating a community of members that "validate" a "lived reality" (ibid), the work of Kent and Couture provide points of perspective for considering how these shared experiences play into communication—both in terms of reception and conception of truth. Whereas Kent raises awareness for the sub- and contextual cues

outside of language that influence the perceptions of understanding for an audience (as *paralogic rhetoric*), Couture narrows in on "truth seeking" by "intersubjective" beings as a way of understanding and conceptualizing knowledge and truth through writing (as *phenomenological rhetoric*). Both illustrate the importance that communal experience shares in the reception and conception of knowledge and truth—whether influenced by forces within and/or outside of language/discourse.

These precepts are further complicated and enriched by the work in contemporary composition studies, where Bizzell—building off the work of Flower and Hayes—exposes for readers how the *process* of writing/composing is influenced by the social and historical conditions that students face both within and outside of the classroom. These experiences are connected with the language practices and discourse communities that students bring with them into the writing classroom. To deny these alternative language practices, discourse communities, and worldviews when conceiving of the writing process, is to strip students of their individual experiences in service of some universal, preconceived standardized language practice. And as Bizzell writes, "The result for students who don't share the school's preferred world views is either failure or deracination" (qtd. in *Cross-Talk* 407). These findings would lead to further debates regarding the *practice* of teaching composition, and bringing to the forefront the need to demystify the conventions of academic writing necessary for students to be successful within the university setting and beyond (see earlier discussion between Bartholomae and Elbow).

Moving beyond the *process* and *practice* of teaching composition, Rickert's work in ambient rhetoric opens up new ways for considering how "intersubjective" beings are

interconnected with the material conditions of the world around them. Much of his work aligns with material rhetoric, especially when considering nontraditional texts and the influence they bear upon how a person dwells within the world. Rickert's framework for considering a rhetoric of ontology is an ambitious goal, but when considered in connection with the work in ecocomposition, and the work achieved in Berlin's SER—i.e. analyzing subject formation within discursive frameworks—new avenues are exposed for considering the ways that human ontology is influenced by social and material forces previously unseen.

The sum total of the literature reviewed provides a diverse array of theories for exploring the nuances that exists in how social and material forces influence language practices, textual production, subject formation, ontological presuppositions, writing processes, and pedagogical strategies for teaching composition. Before moving forward, it is important to be able to look back and survey the scholarship, seeing the terrain, seeing the different camps and approaches to looking at the influence that place (and the social and material conditions of place) hold when looking at language and everyday signifying practices. These diverse theories provide alternate pathways, methodologies, and frameworks. But for this dissertation, place will be analyzed through the framework of SER—extending SER to look at the full implications that the social and material conditions hold in the way we read history, analyze texts, and teach composition.

Before articulating the full argument (or thesis) of this dissertation, it is important to review the research questions that guide this dissertation. These research questions include:

- How might certain signifying practices be connected with the surrounding social and material conditions in which that signifying practice (or production) is expressed?
- If place and signifying practice create a "version of reality," what are the ethical implications?
- Can theories of place be used as a method for textual analysis?
- Might theories of place, when used for textual analysis, uncover hidden motives and influences of a text, whether in terms of ontology, epistemology, belief, value, thought, and/or action?
- Can the study of place be used as a method for teaching writing? In other words, how might the social and material conditions that surround and influence discourse become critical aspects to explore in the composing process?

Each chapter answers these questions with vary degrees, recognizing that there is more work to be done. That said, the argument (or thesis) of this dissertation can be stated directly:

- "Place" is a discursive construct that emerges through language by an individual in conjunction with the social and material conditions of a particular historical moment. As a result, the way one composes texts is discursively influenced by place, and this has consequences to the way one makes meaning, the way one understands knowledge, the way one interprets/analyzes history, the way one understands oneself in relation to others, and the way one teaches writing.

Composing Place: A Preview of Content

Chapter one looks at the ethical implication that SER provides as a framework for analyzing the broad and nuanced social constructions that are enacted by historically situated signifying practices. This theoretical perspective not only informs how texts are composed and interpreted, but it also exposes how cultural codes influence individual subject and audience position (in terms of power, class, gender, identity, and more). Toward this end, SER is more than a pedagogical or scholarly aim, it is an ethical one—and one preceded by an awareness for how signifying practices operate and mediate all forms of a person's lived experience, not only in how they see and understand the world, but also in how they understand who they are in relation to the world. But SER is not the only framework available in composition and rhetoric studies.

Chapter one also looks at ecocomposition (Dobrin and Weisser), ambient rhetoric (Rickert), and complex vitalism (Hawk) as alternative frameworks for looking at the implication that signifying practices imposes. After evaluating all three, and exposing the limitations, this chapter highlights how SER is still relevant and important to the field of composition and rhetoric—specifically, as an adaptable theoretical framework. Moving forward, chapters two, three, and four are extensions that illustrate how SER can be used to discern the influence that the social and material conditions have in our everyday signifying practices. And by being able to identify this influence, one is able to not only re-evaluate history, but analyze contemporary texts for their ontological implications, and explore new methods for teaching composition.

Chapter two is an analysis of Plato's *Phaedrus* using SER and sophistic theories of "nomos" and "physis." This chapter re-evaluates this historical text by isolating the

social and material conditions articulated within the text, including: stated locations, descriptive setting, physical objects, as well as myths and beliefs shared. In order to identify the influence these conditions hold, this chapter applies nomos and physis as theoretical concepts. By approaching the dialogue from this perspective, one not only discovers how the discourse of the text defines Plato's world, but also how that world positions and defines Plato. And by stepping into this discursive framework of Plato's *Phaedrus*, seeing all the ways that the social and material conditions of the world held sway, new lessons are exposed in the way Plato articulates and conceives his version of rhetoric, both as a practice and as a discipline.

Chapter three explores how SER provides a means to discern the ontological implications that recurrent signifying practices hold. The central tenet to SER is "the study and critique of signifying practices in their relation to subject formation within the framework of economic, social, and political conditions" (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 83). SER is a theoretical framework that exposes how these influences can be identified and analyzed by the "discourse available at any historical moment" (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 89). But more than this, SER provides a means to analyze how these embedded influences in discourse hold implications to subject formation (ontologically speaking)—albeit, one limited in scope and generalizability, but nonetheless, one that exposes what would otherwise be hidden. With this in mind, one becomes open to see the historic social, political, and material conditions that structure and influences our lived experience—while simultaneously becoming aware of how one might retain agency in subverting these influences.

It is important to note that chapter three is a mixed-method analysis that looks at the ontological implications of automotive advertisements as a recurrent signifying practice. Before employing SER, this research first incorporates genre studies as a method for analyzing the unique features of automotive advertisements as a recurrent signifying practice. Genre studies fills a methodological gap for SER in that it presents a means of establishing how a recurrent signifying practice operates, is conventionalized, and perpetuated as a social act. More than this, genre studies (and the phenomenon of "genre" as a conventionalized language practice) present clear evidence for how language is a shared construction, one that is malleable, refined, and conventionalized in various ways, by various discourse communities, in various texts and contexts—views readily aligned and shared by SER. By isolating a widely shared language practice, such as automotive advertisements, one is able to narrow in on a signifying practice that has a broad influence on a wide-ranging audience that is readily inundated by this genre—and the ideological forces that are openly normalized in its wake.

Chapter four explores the pedagogical implications that theories of place hold when teaching composition. More specifically, this chapter extends Berlin's stance in SER on how the social and material conditions operate in the production, distribution, and reception of texts—and how this influence presents new methods for teaching composition in the classroom. Starting from this position, this research asks: How might the social and material conditions that surround and influence "discourse in shaping knowledge and consciousness" (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 121), become critical aspects to explore in the composing process?

Just as Berlin uses critical theory to discern "methods of locating and naming the discursive acts that encourage unjust class, race, gender, and [more]" (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 121), this chapter is informed by theories of place to discern methods of locating and naming the myriad ways the social and material conditions hold influence in "shaping knowledge and consciousness" (ibid) for students. In order to achieve this, six themes of place are identified in composition studies that are then adapted into "gateway activities" as George Hillocks describes in *Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice*. Hillocks writes, "Theories of discourse, inquiry, learning, and teaching are useless if we cannot invent the activities that will engage our students in using, and therefore learning, the strategies essential to certain writing tasks" (149). By exposing students to this influence as they develop their abilities to write, and adapting into "gateway activities," students will be exposed to Berlin's idea that "[t]o teach writing is to argue for a version of reality" (ibid).

Notes

[1] It is also important to mention that there are scholars who simultaneously work in professional and technical writing studies.

[2] Hum adapts the visual art theory of the male gaze for her cultural analysis. Gaze theory connects with John Berger's critical work, *Ways of Seeing* (1972), where he writes, "One might simplify this by saying: *men act* and *women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. . . . Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (47).

[3] Another significant work worthy of mention includes *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, edited by Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmer. Like *Ways of Seeing, Ways of Speaking*, this work is a collection of essays that illustrates a diverse range of approaches to studying and analyzing visual aspects within rhetorical discourse—work distinguished as "visual rhetoric." Although unlike Fleckenstein's introduction, which situates the articles within a clear framework of "material rhetoric," this volume lacks any clear definitive framework. As they write in the preface:

> As we thought about the definitional problems surrounding the study of visual rhetoric, it became immediately clear that the appropriate response was *not* to try to 'nail down' the term, to stipulate a set of definitions that all rhetoricians would agree to abide by (a naïve notion, to say the least). Rather, we thought that it would be more interesting and productive to have scholars working with visuals discuss the definitional assumptions behind their own work, and to exemplify these assumptions by sharing their own rhetorical analyses of visual phenomena. (x)

This volume published in 2004 highlights how the area of "visual rhetoric," is still relatively new and burgeoning within the field, with scholars still grappling with ways of understanding the full relationship between the "visual" and "rhetoric"—often with each scholar working with different assumptions and frameworks.

[4] It is important to mention the significance Gregory Clark's *Rhetorical Landscapes in America* (2004) holds in analyzing place from a philosophical perspective. In this work, Clark applies Kenneth Burke's concept of identification as a way of analyzing the rhetorical implications "landscapes" hold—especially here in America, and the way in which different landscapes define America.

[5] Couture writes of these two terms:

> The metaphors "profession" and "altruism" are particularly apt tropes for the phenomenological approach because phenomenology establishes first, that a subject or author is the only concrete and categorical source of professed truth, which is generated entirely through conscious attention to the world observed; and second, that the subject's effort to express the truth of his or her experience is fundamentally altruistic, becoming meaningful only through activity shared openly with others for mutual benefit. (99)

[6] Rickert outlines his adaptive use of Heidegger's use of world (and dwelling):

> "World" [and dwelling] as thought through Heidegger's work would be the mutually achieved composite of meaning and matter; what is disclosed—that is, what presents itself to us through our doing, saying, and making—is disclosed as already fitted into material environments and

> holistic forms of significance. . . . World in this sense is not just the material environs, that is, the "mundane" bedrock of reality, but also the involvements and cares that emerge within and alongside the material environment and that in turn work to bring to presence the environs in the mode that they currently take. World, then, is simultaneously immanent and transcendent to each agent—and that includes nonhuman elements. (xii-xiii)

[7] Much of this sentiment and position towards teaching writing is outlined in *Writing Without Teachers*, originally published in 1973—a work that represents a kind of teaching philosophy for classroom practice geared towards helping students become more conscientious in the choices they make with their own writing (without teachers decreeing one way or another).

CHAPTER I

AN ETHICAL COMPASS: TRAVERSING THE MAELSTROM

> The work of social-epistemic rhetoric, then, is to study the production and reception of these historically specific signifying practices. In other words, social-epistemic rhetoric enables senders and receivers to arrive at a rich formulation of the rhetorical context in any given discourse situation through an analysis of the signifying practices operating within it. Thus, in composing or in interpreting a text, a person engages in an analysis of the cultural codes operating in defining his or her subject position, the positions of the audience, and the constructions of the matter to be considered.
>
> —James Berlin, *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 90

Introduction

In the epigraph above, James Berlin articulates how social-epistemic rhetoric (SER) provides a theoretical frame for analyzing the broad and nuanced social constructions that are enacted by historically situated signifying practices. This theoretical perspective not only informs how texts are composed and interpreted, but it also exposes how cultural codes influence individual subject and audience positioning (in terms of power, class, gender, identity, and more). In short, Berlin's SER maintains a clear stance for how language and discourse operates, as well as the consequences this imposes upon the

world. To this end, Berlin writes, "My proposals for English studies thus encourage a professoriate as confident in teaching the ways of text production as it now is in dealing with certain forms of textual interpretation" (RPC 123). Berlin advocates for a level of critical awareness and capability for all English instructors, not only in being able to instruct in "textual production," but also in having the critical awareness to analyze and interpret texts for how they construct, perpetuate, or manifest social and ideological influence in the world.

This is more than a pedagogical or scholarly aim, it is an ethical one—and one preceded by an awareness for how signifying practices operate and mediate all forms of a person's lived experience, not only in how they see and understand the world, but also in how they understand who they are in relation to the world. With this critical awareness come more questions, such as: How is one to live and navigate through the world from this perspective? What actions and pursuits are desired? How is one to approach the work both in and outside the classroom? Moving forward, this chapter explores how SER (and the social and material conditions connected with SER) is more than a theoretical stance toward discourse and composition studies, but an ethic—one that not only informs a classroom practice, but research and scholarship still needed. This critical awareness and ethical stance is one that parallels Berlin's goal for advancing democratic ideals through education. It is an ethic that can be adapted to advance progressive social ideals that include: exposing abuse of power, class divisions, hetero-normative gender and identity constructs, and other social and culture influences that marginalize through discourse. To use an analogy, SER is a theoretical compass (highly adaptable) that helps one chart and

identify the maelstrom of forces within any given text, and the social and historic conditions associated with the text.

Charting the Maelstrom

As the title of this chapter suggests, my conception of SER as an ethical stance is one that is situated in conjunction to the figurative idea of a "maelstrom," which is a 17th century Dutch phrase meaning "whirl stream," which referred to "a famous whirlpool in the Arctic Ocean off the west coast of Norway, formerly supposed to suck in and destroy vessels within a long radius" (*Oxford Companion to English Literature* 484). This image calls to mind a colossal confluence of forces acting together in ways that pull people into it, much in the same way that social and cultural forces enacted through discourse pulls upon individuals, positioning them in terms of power, class, gender, identity and so forth.

These unseen social and cultural forces can be, at times, inescapable—marginalizing, destabilizing, and dehumanizing audience subject-hood and positioning. They can be found enacted in all forms of discourse (textual, visual, and oral) and all forms of material mediums (spatially, digitally, and bodily). At the surface level, these unseen forces can seem innocuous, simple, mundane, and disinterested in motive. But left unexposed, they can have broad social, political, economic, and ideological implications.

There are many areas of development and scholars in composition and rhetoric that are currently leading the way in exposing these forces. For example, Nedra Reynolds' *Geographies of Writing* explores how physical space and geography can be social and culturally defined. Cynthia Self explores how technology and literacy are grounded and complicated by social and cultural issues (see "The Politics of the Interface"). Kristie S. Fleckenstein's *Ways of Seeing, Ways of Speaking*, presents a

collection of essays that look at how the material conditions of our surroundings and visual discourse—whether scientific illustrations or Disney movies—are socially and culturally constructed, and rhetorically relevant forms of discourse that influence norms, values, and beliefs. Sharon Crowley, Jack Selzer, and Debra Hawhee have made significant contributions in exposing how the "body" is a contested site, discursively constructed by social and cultural norms (see *Rhetorical Bodies* 1999, and *Bodily Arts* 2004). Krista Ratcliffe's *Rhetorical Listening* presents strategies for overcoming racially constructed and gendered divides, so as to facilitate listening between individuals. Her strategies specifically address overcoming the socially and culturally constructed "non-" and "dis-identifications" a person may hold when listening to another who is different (in terms of race or gender). Dobrin and Weisser's *Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*, presents a whole movement for considering how ecology becomes an operative metaphor for considering writing as a process, and the social and cultural influences that not only play into our writing practices—but the way these influences discursively construct and influence how one conceives the surrounding environment.

These are just some of the scholars[1], and some of the areas dedicated to exposing the manifestations that social and cultural influences can have through discourse (whether written, visual, or spoken) and extended material mediums (whether spatially, digitally, or bodily). This extended scholarship of criticism, various in form, shares a common goal, even if unstated and unaware—namely, an ethical aim. In each example, and in each context of research, one not only attains a level of critical awareness, but one is left to answer the question: "What now? How can I apply this in my personal and professional life?" This question, rooted in the subject (whether teacher or student), is in

part what Lester Faigley attempts to explore in his final chapter, "The Ethical Subject" in *Fragments of Rationality*. As Faigley writes, "I have argued throughout this book that many of the conflicts within composition studies concern larger cultural conflicts over the question of the subject" (225). Faigley goes on to share how this focus on the subject is more complicated than at first consideration. Faigley writes:

> The instability of the subject in postmodern theory is one aspect of the "impasse" of postmodern theory, which I discuss in the introduction. The subject, like judgments of value and validations, has no grounding outside contingent discourses. (225-227)

In other words, studying the cultural codes enacted through discourse must ultimately be seen in relation to the individual subject, all the while knowing that the very idea of the "subject" is a fragmented, complicated notion in view to postmodern theory today. And as Faigley states, which requires repeating, "The subject, like judgments of value and validations, has no grounding outside contingent discourses" (ibid). This idea of the "subject" being substantiated through "contingent discourses," is one that is worth some further consideration—especially as it aligns with Berlin's social-epistemic rhetoric.

"Subject" in Social-Epistemic Rhetoric

Lester Faigley's discussion of the "unstable" subject (227) in relation to postmodern theory in composition studies is reinforced in view by Berlin's SER. This view is explicitly outlined in chapter 4 "Postmodernism in the Academy," in *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* (RPC). In this section, Berlin highlights how structuralist and poststructuralist theories in postmodernism—including work by theorists such as Lacan,

Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida—have dramatically altered how one understands the "subject" through signifying practices. The end result of their work leads Berlin to write:

> The speaking, acting subject is no longer considered unified, rational, autonomous, or self-present. Instead, each person is regarded as the construction of the various signifying practices, the uses of language and cultural codes, of a given historical moment. In other words, the subject is not the source and origin of these practices but is finally their product. (65-66)

This aligns with Faigley's work, but Berlin doesn't stop here with considering the unstable subject purely through signifying practices. Berlin recognizes that the historically situated signifying practices are grounded by the social and material conditions, which manifest in other ways. He goes on to write:

> This means that each of us is formed by the various discourses and sign systems that surround us. These include not only everyday uses of language (discursive formations) in the home, school, the media, and other institutions, but the material conditions (nondiscursive formations) that are arranged in the manner of languages—that is semiotically—including such things as the clothes we wear, the way we carry our bodies, and the way our school and home environments are arranged. These signifying practices are languages that tell us who we are and how we should behave in terms of such categories as gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, and the like. The result is that each of us is heterogeneously made up of various

> competing discourses, conflicted and contradictory scripts, that make our consciousness anything but unified, coherent, and autonomous. (65)

The end result is that each one of us, considered as a "subject," is a mass of influenced constructions, both in terms of discursive and nondiscursive formations. The world about, and the ways in which we define ourselves in relation to the world about, is a composition. This "maelstrom" of social and cultural influence is so pervasive, the task of beginning to know our own subject positioning requires self-reflexive questioning of everything—both literally and figuratively. Berlin says it best when he writes, "In short, we are constituted by subject formations and subject positions that do not always square with each other. To state the case in its most extreme form, each of us is finally conflicted, incoherent, amorphous, protean, and irrational in our very constitution" (66).

This prognosis of the "subject" seems hopelessly overwhelming, tantamount to a jumbled mess left to obscurity by contemporary postmodern theory. But Berlin has an answer to this as well in the section that follows in "The Rhetorical Response" (72).

Social-Epistemic Rhetoric as a Response to Postmodernism

Though discursive and nondiscursive signifying practices may leave the "subject" an un-unified mess of social cultural influences, Berlin highlights that postmodern theory has essentially liberated academic thought in the process—specifically when considering the constitutive role discourse creates with knowledge. The end result is that postmodernist theory has dismantled the former prevailing assumptions that there exist universal and transcendent truths—that pure, objective, un-interested reason can be achieved through language. The messy "truth" of postmodernism is achieved in the full embrace of contingency and indeterminacy when considering how discourse operates in conveying

any unified thought. Texts, truth, and subjects become a Cheshire cat of sorts: vanishing one minute while re-appearing in an alternate way, reassembled disjointed from head to body, and then unraveling again upon itself—an exasperated array of instability when pressed under the microscope of postmodern scrutiny.

Berlin highlights this prevailing position, and this emerging "postmodern rhetoric," principally with the work of Victor Vitanza (1991), and responds with a hopeful possibility. Berlin writes:

> In what follows, I will offer what I take to be promising possibilities for responding to the postmodern challenge to traditional conceptions of subject, society, and material conditions in a refigured English studies. In doing so, I have tried to take into consideration the criticism of my earlier attempts at this project posed by Victor Vitanza, the thinker who has most shown use the vexing problems postmodern thought creates. (73)

Postmodernism forces a re-evaluation of knowledge, practice, and theory in all disciplines. It is a game-changer in the way one considers what is stable, true, and constant. Toward this end, Berlin articulates a response, showing the reader how social-epistemic rhetoric "intersect[s] with postmodern speculation" (82). In articulating this response, Berlin is doing more than giving into the instability and indeterminacy of postmodern thinking. Instead, he invokes this fragmented condition as a means of understanding the social and cultural forces that play into the construction of texts, truths, and subjects—while simultaneously finding a means to evaluate the determinacy these forces create through historically situated signifying practices. To put simply, SER opens up the possibility to identify interested forces that attempt to reify truths in service of

perpetuating particular social and political hegemony. It is in this pursuit that Berlin breaks with Vitanza's postmodern rhetoric, and articulates how SER is an ethical imperative when analyzing the "contingent metanarratives . . . for the past and present" (77).

Social-Epistemic Rhetoric as an Ethical Imperative

Though not stated directly, Berlin makes a clear call for advancing SER as an ethical imperative when discussing how—in this postmodern era—one understands historical and contemporary accounts of human events. Instead of grand narratives, Berlin makes room for "provisional, contingent metanarratives" (ibid) when trying to understand and analyze the past and present events. By embracing a view that includes metanarratives when analyzing human events, Berlin opens a space for limited understanding of subjects, texts, and truths. It is a minimal space of solid ground in what is an otherwise endless space of indeterminacy created by postmodernism. I say "minimal" because even Berlin notes the "contingent" aspect of these metanarratives, but it is a space that at least accounts for the social, cultural, and material forces that influence and construct: subjects, consciousness, texts, and truths—even if in pastiche form. Berlin writes:

> Here Vitanza and I totally part company. While history may be marked by no inherent plan or progression, it is the product of complex interactions of disparate groups, social institutions, ideologies, technological conditions, and modes of production. *To abandon the attempt to make sense of these forces in the unfolding of history is to risk being victimized by them*. (my emphasis 77-78)

It is in the last line that Berlin articulates an ethical imperative to the work of SER, searching and analyzing past and present events so as "to make sense of these forces in the unfolding of history" so as to not be "victimized by them" (ibid). This ethical imperative is joined by the cognitive complexity that comes with attempting to piece together past and/or present events through identifying the social, cultural, and material forces enacted by historically situated signifying practices—all the while being sensitive and reflexively conscientious to one's own situated historical perspective. Though at first daunting to consider, SER provides a theoretical means to realizing this ethical imperative. Berlin writes:

> From this perspective, the subject is the point of intersection and influence of various conflicted discourses—discourses about class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, and the like. Of equal importance, the subject in turn acts upon these discourses. The individual is the location of a variety of significations, but is also an agent of change, not simply an unwitting product of external discursive and material forces. The subject negotiates and resists codes rather than simply accommodating them. (85)

From this perspective, and seen through SER, the subject is equipped with agency to not only identify the influence of "external discourse and material forces" (ibid), but have the means to "negotiate" and "resist" these forces. In this way, SER provides a means to evaluate and analyze history and contemporary texts—while simultaneously having the means to evaluate the ethical implications that such forces had/have in the past and present. This agency and means of evaluation offers an ethical imperative to expose

social and cultural forces that marginalize, de-humanize, and reify distorted, oppressive versions of past and present events. Though contingent or limited in scope, this ethical aim is clear—SER is an ethical imperative that ultimately aligns with Berlin's claim that "To teach writing," especially through the lens of SER, is a means "to argue for a version of reality" ("Contemporary Composition" 766). It is "a version of reality" that not only accounts for the complexity that postmodernism exposes, but also equips "subjects" with the means and agency to create a better vision/version.

Social-Epistemic Rhetoric as a Theoretical Framework

Berlin's social-epistemic rhetoric emerges from the New Rhetoric movement of the 20th century, specifically from Robert L. Scott's work ("On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic"), but also more broadly rooted in the rhetorical scholarship of I.A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, S.I. Hayakawa, Alfred Korzybski, Daniel Fogarty, Richard Weaver, Marie Hochmuth Nichols, and Northrop Frye (*Rhetoric and Reality* 168).

One of the new presuppositions that emerged from this extensive body of scholarship is the idea that truth and knowledge are entwined and constitutive of discourse and signifying practices. Epistemic rhetoric calls attention to not only how we craft/compose communication, but that in the act of composing, in the act of using language, one is simultaneously creating knowledge and meaning. As Berlin explains:

> Epistemic rhetoric holds that language is the key to understanding the dialectical process involved in the rhetorical act. Knowledge does not exist apart from language. Thus, the task of the interlocutor is not simply to find the appropriate words to communicate—to contain—a nonverbal reality.

> Language, instead, embodies and generates knowledge, and there is no knowledge without language. (*Rhetoric and Reality* 166-67)

When this idea is considered in conjunction with the ways that postmodern theory has exposed the unstable, un-unified "subject"—and how the conception of subject is the product of historically situated signifying practices—one is exposed to see that SER not only presents a clear means for understanding epistemology, but also the forces and signifying precepts that account, in a limited way, an ontology for humans as "subject." In other words, SER is a grounded theoretical framework (with clear presuppositions and demarcated boundaries) that accounts for epistemology and human ontology. More than this, it is a theoretical framework that can be adapted for research purposes in history, politics, economics, cultural studies, genre studies, and more. But SER is not the only theoretical framework in composition and rhetoric studies that attempts to account for a broad array of signifying practices, and the influence that such signifying practices have in the world.

Alternative Approaches: Competing Theories and Systems

In order to see the adaptability of SER, it is important to review a few alternative approaches and competing theories in composition and rhetoric. This review is certainly not exhaustive, and it should be noted up front that my discussion of these alternative approaches is limited in scope to their entire projects. With the limited space provided here, this discussion will only include a look at three contemporary frameworks that align and/or diverge, at least in certain ways, with SER. These frameworks include: *Ecocomposition* (Dobrin and Weisser), *Ambient Rhetoric* (Rickert), and *Complex Vitalism* (Hawk).

* * *

The first one under analysis is Sidney I. Dobrin and Christian R. Weisser's work in ecocomposition, an area of scholarship that is a theoretical framework for understanding: nature, humanity, humanity's place within nature, humanity's understanding of nature through discourse, and the constitutive relationship that exists between discourse and the environment. For a fuller definition, they write:

> Ecocomposition is the study of the relationships between environments (and by that we mean natural, constructed, and even imagined places) and discourse (speaking, writing, and thinking). Ecocomposition draws primarily from disciplines that study discourse (chiefly composition, but also including literary studies, communication, cultural studies, linguistics, and philosophy) and merges the perspectives of them with work in disciplines that examine environment (these include ecology, environmental studies, sociobiology, and other "hard" sciences). As a result, ecocomposition attempts to provide a more holistic, encompassing framework for studies of the relationship between discourse and environment. (*Natural Discourse* 6)

Ecocomposition maintains a similar stance to SER, namely in the idea that discourse is inherently connected to the historically situated social and material conditions in which it is produced—thereby, actively constructing how that environment is defined or understood. Discourse is not only a means for understanding the environment, but it simultaneously provides a means for understanding humanity's place within that constructed "environment." They write:

> Ecocomposition contends that the place in which discourse emerges directly affects that very discourse. That is, ecocomposition posits that environment precedes race, class, gender, and culture. Of course, as we have argued, that very environment is known only through discourse. (31-32)

There is much to admire in ecocomposition, and the way in which this theoretical framework provides a means to unpacking how place, people, and the planet is directly related to the discourse that is used to construct each. The inclusivity and methodological openness in finding multiple ways for studying and analyzing this complex relationship is another strength to ecocomposition. And in many ways, ecocomposition—with its strong emphasis on ecology, environment, and place—is an extension to seeing how the social and material conditions of our surrounding environments are rich areas for exploration. This framework, though stylistically drawn with overtures for environmental activism, might properly be seen as an extension to Berlin's SER, with Dobrin and Weisser extending and complicating how the social and material conditions are connected with our signifying practices.

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The next theoretical framework under analysis is Thomas Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric*, which is an ambitious work that attempts to show how rhetoric is not just involved with knowledge and epistemology (i.e. rhetoric as epistemic), but that it is also steeped in being and ontology. Rickert writes:

> In conceiving rhetoric as ontological, then, I engage with questions concerning not just how human beings generate and negotiate knowledge,

> how rhetoric reflects conceptions of human sociality, or how rhetoric advances life but how human beings and the world *are*. (xv)

It is important to mention this upfront to illustrate how Rickert is not just outlining a theoretical approach for discerning place, or ways in which we know the world through language, but that his goal is to carve out a new space in rhetoric, one that accounts for "ambience" as a way of understanding ontology *within* and *of* the world—a discursive framework by which to see the implications in the interconnectedness all around us. Rickert constructs an argument that sees the material world as pervasive in its influence of "being," so much so that our ordinary perceptions are blind to this influence, but that through careful thought, one might be able to perceive and gain knowledge in the rich complexity of our interconnectedness with the world. Rhetoric, then, becomes the vehicle for achieving this understanding. He writes:

> Rhetoric accomplishes its work by inducing us to shift, at least potentially, how we dwell or see ourselves dwelling in the world. Rhetoric does not just change subjective states of mind; it transforms our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world, how we dwell. I use the term *dwelling* here to mean how people come together to flourish (or try to flourish) in a place, or better, how they come together in the continual making of a place; at the same time, that place is interwoven into the way they have come to be as they are—and as further disclosed through their dwelling practices. (xiii)

This notion of "dwelling," as Rickert later outlines, is informed from Heidegger's use of the term. A critical part of this passage is discerning how Rickert positions rhetoric as a

comprehensive framework for *being* within and of the world, a framework that accounts for the way in which people participate within a place, and the way place participates with people—a sort of self-reflexive, immersive rhetoric retaining conscientious awareness to the way we influence and are simultaneously influenced by our surroundings. The material condition of the world is integral to Rickert's position, and aligns with much of the scholarship in material rhetorics.

When considered in relation to SER, ambient rhetoric appears to construct a framework that attempts to identify the complex relation of interconnectedness, and the "agency" these outside material forces hold in relation to the human agent, as "subject." Instead of identifying these forces through the signifying practices found in "discourse formations" and "nondiscourse formations" as Berlin outlines in SER (RPC 65), ambient rhetoric uses key tropes that include "ambience" (5), "attunement" (8), and "terroir" (271) to begin to identify these nonhuman material forces. These metaphors become theoretical terms that underpin Rickert's approach to unpacking what "rhetorical being" looks like, and how they expose interconnections to our surrounding environment. Much of Rickert's work provides a compelling perspective to looking at how place can inform what it means to *be*, ontologically speaking. Beyond the metaphysical contemplation though, its adaptability for social and cultural purposes remains moot and lacks any clear imperative, other than reinvigorating Heidegger's philosophical work, which at the very least is ethically and mindfully straining.

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The final framework under analysis is about "vitalism," as found in Byron Hawk's *A Counter-History of Composition: Toward Methodologies of Complexity*. In this work,

Hawk traces the development of three types of vitalism, including: oppositional, investigative, and complex (5). The ultimate aim in Hawk's work is to create "A new paradigm built around complexity . . . [to] produce a post-dialectical understanding of contemporary pedagogies of invention for the emerging scene produced by digital technology" (7).

Much could be discussed in this work, whether about the reading of Coleridge's method of invention, assumptions perpetuated in the historiography of composition and rhetoric, and all the ways that "vitalism" is extended, analyzed, and brought to bear in the works of authors that include: Vitanza (3), Aristotle (122), Foucault (133), Bergson (150), Heidegger (171), and many others. By revising and exploring past conceptions of "vitalism" in relation to the field, Hawk opens up a framework for re-envisioning the field of composition and rhetoric to account for the complex relation that individuals face in relation to the world in which they live. Hawk writes: "The previous discussion has been but a sketch of how rhetorical theory might map onto complex vitalism or distributed vitality, especially with regard to rhetorical situatedness and how argument might be rethought for such situatedness" (191). This position is later elaborated and extended into how it can be adapted as a pedagogical method (see chapter 6).

Though there is much to appreciate with Hawk's work, I find a troubling binary that frames his re-reading of composition history. This binary is in the way Berlin's SER is read and positioned in relation to expressivism for the implicit purposes of furthering a "complex vitalist" agenda. Hawk writes:

> A more complex view of writing and rhetoric seen from this expanded perspective on vitalism would equally set aside the arguments that result

> from the opposition between expressivism and social-epistemic rhetoric and attempt to see writing processes as appropriately complex; the binaries teachable or unteachable, rhetoric or poetic, social or personal all reduce the complexity of writing. (7)

Hawk frames a big chunk of composition history (and pedagogical division) as being made up of a binary between SER and expressivism, with SER being "teachable," "rhetoric," and "social," as opposed to experessivism being "unteachable," "poetic," and "personal." This binary allows Hawk to position "complex vitalism" as some type of resounding answer that more accurately accounts for the complexities of the writing process. From his perspective, vitalism manages to combine expressivism and social-epistemic rhetoric as some kind of third approach, post-dialectic epistemology, opening up a new methodology for complexities.

The only problem is, this position relies upon a narrow reading of Berlin's SER. Hawk writes,

> As Berlin accepts a Marxist framework for his politics and writing pedagogy, language and ideology become a more central element in his epistemological maps, a turn that ultimately excludes vitalist or bodily epistemologies in favor of more mind-centered pedagogies that focus on unmasking false consciousness. (8)

The problem with this reading is that it essentially overlooks Berlin's explicit views on the importance that the social and material conditions play in signifying practices, and how signifying practices are historically situated (including discursive and nondiscursive formations; see RPC 65). By ignoring this important presupposition of SER, Hawk is

able to fill this void with vitalism, and scholars like Paul Kameen who approach composition studies with sensitivity for the local, individual, and phenomenological view. Hawk writes:

> Operating from a basis in Heideggerian phenomenology, Kameen looks to establish a new space for reading Coleridge, dialectics, and method that emphasizes the explicit as well as intuitive relation between a body and a situation. This position opens the way for a third reading of method and a rereading of vitalism. It articulates an epistemology beyond those established in Berlin's categories and sets the stage for an expanded notion of method and more possibilities for composition pedagogies. (9)

In otherwords, Hawk positions Kameen's approach as an example of "vitalism," one that establishes a phenomenological view of subjects, one that includes an "intuitive relation between a body and a situation" (ibid), and one that aligns with a post-dialectic, post-process approach to understanding the composing process.

Hawk's view of the subject is further discussed in his section, "Complex Vitalism in the Humanities" (158). In this section, Hawk reviews the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to outline his view on what subjects are, as "desiring machines" (165). Hawk writes:

> The subject is a molar [or material mass] residual, off to the side, a side effect of desiring-machines, not a single center from which desire is born. If the subject is just a residual effect of the process of life, then any action produced by this subject, whether material or linguistic, is an expression

> of the whole process as a series of events, not the subject as an individual, unitary substance. (165)

From this perspective, Hawk appears to respond to postmodernity's charge that the subject is an indeterminate, un-unified whole, and Berlin's position that the social and cultural forces that influence subjects can be identified. For Hawk, and his position on complex vitalism, the subject—and any material or linguistic expression of the subject—is the result of a larger system in play, an ecological interconnectedness that turns Berlin's categories for identifying the social and cultural influences that includes race, politics, ideology, class, gender, etc., into a minor feat. This position is fully expressed when Hawk writes:

> Expression is an internal function of this ecological potential, a product of a desire that sets a line of flight in motion from potentiality to actuality. And just as the subject and expression cannot be seen as separate from their larger material ecology, rhetoric, techne, and heuristics have to be seen in the complexity of their ecological grounds. Complex vitalism recognizes this virtual potential. The "mysterious" element so many in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century thinkers were looking for becomes the "tipping point" of complexity—that point at which the interaction of a multitude of individual parts begins to act with coherence as if it had a molar purpose or intention driving it or pulling it but is in fact a moment of emergence. It is this moment of complexity, which has been mistakenly dismissed as mystical, that haunts rhetoric and composition. (165)

Perhaps my limited knowledge base leaves me from seeing the full benefit that "complex vitalism,' allows for in the field, methodologically speaking. More than anything, it appears to be a theoretical framework that abandons traditional categories of rhetorical analysis, textual production, and pedagogical methods, in favor of a space of intuition and viewing subjects as "molar" entities that think and act from a complex network of prior events—a matrix that attempts to account for everything, by abandoning everything, in favor of everything. It is as if Hawk wants to erase and reboot composition and rhetoric for "Vitalism 2.0," where divisions, categories, and paradigms in the field are seen as simplistic discursive constructs that complex vitalism transcends. Complex vitalism appears to be a kind of new disciplinary interface—aligning with "the emerging scene produced by digital technology" (7). At the end of the work, Hawk writes, "As the primary principle underlying vitalism, the question of life similarly cuts across categories, paradigms, authors, and texts, opening them to various combinations—all of which are potentially valuable if the conditions of possibility set the rules for their emergence" (274).

Why Social-Epistmeic Rhetoric is Still Relevant

James Berlin's *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* was originally published almost 20 years ago (1996), posthumously. Since then, ecocomposition, ambient rhetoric, and complex vitalism, have emerged in the field (among others). These three theoretical frameworks offer intriguing alternative perspectives when analyzing signifying practices, and the way in which discourse shapes epistemology and ontology. There is much to appreciate and explore with these emerging frameworks. In many ways, ecocomposition aligns with SER, extending Berlin's work by drawing attention to the way discourse is inherently

connected with the surrounding environment. In regards to ambient rhetoric, Rickert provides an intriguing re-evaluation for how the discipline of rhetoric can be used as a framework to alter and inform *being*, ontologically speaking, in-and-of-the-world through conscientious consideration of one's material surroundings. And Hawk's complex vitalism offers an alternative approach to reconsidering the field, as well as pedagogies of invention.

As compelling as each is, I believe each framework lacks in certain ways, whether in its adaptability and/or the ethical imperative that SER brings to bear. Ecocomposition extends SER, explicitly in discerning the inherent relationship that exists between the social and material conditions surrounding discourse—whether in its use, its representations, and/or its constructions. But ecocomposition is positioned to analyze subject formation within the *framework of the natural world*, limiting its means to discern and adapt beyond this. Ambient rhetoric, though based in material rhetorics and positioned to inform ontological implications of being, elides its ability for methodological application. Beyond the metaphysical contemplation, ambient rhetoric is a self-inscribed, self-limiting framework of thought. And finally, complex vitalism is an interesting counter perspective to SER, but one that depends upon dismantling traditional categories of rhetorical analysis, textual production, and pedagogical methods, so as to reframe everything from its own position. By doing so, and giving into believing subjects as "molar" entities that conceives "any actions produced by this subject, whether material or linguistic, is an expression of the whole process as a series of events, not the subject as an individual, unitary substance" (165), then one essentially abdicates any conception of ethics—at least of an ethic that presumes an individual's ability to do right or wrong.

From this framework, the subject is subsumed by the circumstances of the larger system in play. SER goes beyond these limitations and retains an ethical imperative that pushes the field of composition and rhetoric forward.

SER is not going anywhere any time soon. Jumping ship is not an option. There is still much work to be done. One of its compelling strengths is its own recognition for the limits it can achieve. Berlin writes, "Social-epistemic rhetoric is self-reflexive, acknowledging its own rhetoricity, its own discursive constitution and limitations" (88). These limitations are its strengths. SER delineates clear boundaries. SER does not overreach in making knowledge claims. SER accounts for contingency. SER embraces metanarratives. SER recognizes that there is no one History, but rather makes room for "histories"—providing a limited means to evaluate discourse so as to see certain social and cultural forces present in discourse. And above all else, SER provides agency for individuals to identify and counter-act discursive and nondiscursive formations that influence subject-hood and positioning. In this way, there is an ethical imperative to SER that informs the broader research goals of composition and rhetoric as a field, both in the work we perform in the classroom, and the scholarship we pursue beyond. Moving forward, chapters two, three, and four are extensions that illustrate how SER can be used to discern the influence that the social and material conditions have in our everyday signifying practices. And by being able to identify this influence, one is able to not only re-evaluate history, but analyze contemporary texts for their ontological implications, and explore new methods for teaching composition.

Note

[1] Other scholars include Jacqueline Jones Royster's *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* (see her section "Literacy as Sociopolitical Action" 45-46); Sharon Crowley's look at the social and cultural aspects of religious fundamentalism in America in *Toward A Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*; Susan Jarratt's "Classic and Counterpublics in Nineteenth-Century Historically Black Colleges;" and many others. For a further look and the extensive work in cultural studies, see "Cultural Studies and Composition" by Diana George, Tim Lockridge, and John Trimbur, in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*.

CHAPTER II

PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

Enduring Time and Influence

Plato's *Phaedrus* has been an enduring source of inquiry, insight, and inspiration for over two millennia. It is the cornerstone to the discipline of rhetoric. It is found within introductory works, historical reviews, and companion guides to ancient rhetoric (Bizzell and Herzberg, Kennedy, Gunderson). It is a dialogue surrounded by debates and controversies, whether about its exact date written in Plato's oeuvre, its changed opinion of rhetoric in relation to *Gorgias*, or its very structure, unity, and theme[1] (see Weaver, Nichols Jr., and Kastely). Even today, new readings and insights of the dialogue are still emerging, whether about the influence literary theory played in the translation of Plato's *Phaedrus* in the 20th century (Logie), or the role myth and memory performs in Plato's conception of rhetoric in the dialogue (Frentz). Outside of the discipline, the dialogue has been used in service and extension of a wide range of interests, whether for moral philosophy[2], literary theory[3], feminist criticism[4], historical/textual analysis[5], or psychology[6]. It is a dialogue with an unquestionably long history of influence, especially in regards to the development and discipline of rhetoric.

In Roman times, the influence of the dialogue is present—going so far as to be the starting reference to Cicero's *De Oratore*, taking place outside of Crassus' Tuscan villa,

and in the garden. During the walk, Scaevola[7] asks:

> Say, Crassus, why don't we follow the example of Socrates as he appears in Plato's *Phaedrus*? For your plane tree here suggests this to me, by spreading its broad boughs to shade this place exactly like that other plane tree whose shade Socrates sought. (May and Wisse 63-64)

For Cicero to reference and set the scene in such a fashion, written in 55 BC and close to 300 years after Plato's work, is more than enough to underscore the profound impact the *Phaedrus* has had on the discipline and development of rhetorical studies. This enduring influence would last for almost 2,000 years.

Shifting Attitudes on Plato and Histories of Rhetoric

> Antiquity bestowed on him [Plato] the epithet *divine*, and all in modern times have acknowledged his merit and admired his writings.
>
> —J.J. Eschenburg, *Manual of Classical Literature* (1854)

It is more or less banal to mention the high esteem and scholarly acclaim of Plato's work. One could cite an almost innumerable amount of honorific lines to Plato's influence over the many years since he first wrote his dialogues. Perhaps A.N. Whitehead said it best of Plato's pervasive influence when he writes, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato" (*Process and Reality* 39). And yet, interestingly, this high esteem and influence would wane through rhetoric's development in the 20th century. This can be seen with select scholars in the New Rhetoric movement of the 1950s advancing an Aristotelian foundation to contemporary rhetoric, as opposed to a Platonic one[8] (McKeon, Burke, Booth); it should be noted that this Neo-Aristotelianism would be prominently connected

with the "Chicago School" that includes McKeon, Booth, and others (Henderson). This pushback against Plato can also be seen later in the 1980s and 1990s, with a revival in tracing rhetoric's roots in sophistic doctrines connected with Protagoras, Gorgias, Isocrates, Aspasia and others (Jarratt, Schiappa, McComiskey). This awkward distancing from Plato is slightly ironic considering how recent scholarship has been able to show that Plato, in fact, was the first one to coin and define the term "rhetoric" (Schiappa 40; Kennedy's *Classical Rhetoric* 1).

As foundational as Plato's dialogues have been, it is clear that many contemporary theories and practices of rhetoric have tended to hold Plato's version of rhetoric at arms length—distancing itself from Plato's espoused positions of ideal truths, and absolute knowledge found through cosmic or divine forces—a view largely considered passé and unsophisticated with contemporary scholarship. As scholars in the late 20th century embraced postmodern theories of language and epistemic rhetoric—as well as political, ideological, and gender-informed theories associated with language practices—Plato was quickly elided in the conversation, and generally regarded as problematic to contemporary scholars that found new meaning and relevance to the work advanced by the early sophists as true precursors to contemporary rhetorical/epistemic theories of today. Berlin highlights this shifting attitude in the field in his essay, "Revisionary Histories of Rhetoric" (1994). He writes how "Corbett valorizes [sic] Aristotle while Kennedy enthrones Plato. . . . In the case of this example, I would disagree with both, looking to certain Sophists as the most fruitful demonstration of rhetoric in ancient Greece because they offer the best precedent for a modern democracy" (qtd. in *Writing Histories of Rhetoric* 122). And Berlin is not alone in this sentiment, with

scholars such as Vitanza, Jarratt, Schiappa, McComiskey, Crowley, Swearingen and others making similar gestures—with many cueing this shift of attitude in 1988, at what has come to be known as the first Octalog, published as "The Politics of Historiography" (*Rhetoric Review*).

This shifting predisposition through the 1980s and 1990s would lead some historians, such as Knoblauch and Brannon in *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing* (1984), to distort and generalize classical rhetoric for contemporary purposes, doing so by constructing "traditions" that begin with Aristotle, and excludes Plato:

> The major documents of the tradition [include], Aristotle's *Rhetorica*, Cicero's *De Inventione* and *De Oratore*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* . . . To examine the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, therefore, is to discover the deepest, earliest underpinnings of conservative writing instruction [of today]. (22-24)

Responding to Knoblauch and Brannon's work, Kathleen Welch writes in *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric* (1990) that "[t]he removal of Plato from classical rhetoric . . . illustrates one of the book's major problems, and one of the major problems in contemporary rhetoric and composition studies" (45). Interestingly, Welch is not alone in her criticism of Knoblauch and Brannon's work. In Sharon Crowley's essay entitled, "Let Me Get This Straight," she highlight's Richard Leo Enos's 1986 response (in *College Composition and Communication*) to Knoblauch and Brannon's work, writing how:

> Enos argues that their 'rendering of classical rhetoric is largely inaccurate and (consequently) misleading to readers' since it offers 'inaccurate and

> incomplete generalizations' that stereotype classical rhetoric as an inert series of 'rhetorical traditions' (qtd. in *Writing Histories of Rhetoric* 2).

Moving beyond the specific criticism of Knoblauch and Brannon's work, Welch highlights how Plato's version of rhetoric in recent years has been silenced, going so far as to show how select scholars "surgically remove" and "obscure" his ideas from the larger conversation in contemporary studies of rhetoric (47). Much of her critique and purpose within the work is intended to expose the complicated nature of doing historical research, but in so doing, she exposes research practices that have condensed and decontextualized history in ways that have marginalized and distorted select figures (as seen by Knoblauch and Brannon). She writes:

> The decontextualizing of texts and issues in classical rhetoric derives from a primary symptom of the rhetoric unconscious: the merging of 700 years of rhetorical theory into one idea . . . . The making of a monolith such as this one requires bypassing the epistemologies of various rhetoricians and therefore ignoring the systems of their thought and obscuring crucial cultural distinctions. In other words, decontextualizing necessarily obscures the thought of classical rhetoricians. (28)

Much of this critique leads to her later chapter on how Plato falls victim to this historicizing. In chapter four, Welch makes a call for renewed interest in Plato's rhetoric, especially as found in the *Phaedrus*. As much as her critique has resonance today, it is important to mention that a lot of work has been done on the *Phaedrus* since her work was published in 1990[9]. But her larger evaluation about doing historical research and avoiding the decontextualizing of key rhetorical figures and theories is something that

warrants further attention, especially when looking at how historical rhetoric is discussed, researched, and written today.

Emerging Discussion Over Historiographies

Welch's work is written at a time when new discussions were emerging about how to properly write histories of rhetoric, what methods should be used in analyzing histories of rhetoric, what purpose should surround these histories, and what are the ways we should read these histories that will in turn lead to reconstruct them responsibly through our own writing? In *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric* (2013), Michelle Ballif writes about this stirring time:

> During the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, such conversations were prominent and ubiquitous—in the journals and at our conventions. . . . Indeed, so vociferous (and often heatedly so) was this particular scholarly conversation that during this period, as Arthur E. Walzer and David Beard note, publications "engaging historiographical debates outnumbered articles in traditional history in rhetoric-centered journals" (17). (1-2)

One well-known event occurred in 1988, referenced earlier as the first Octalog, with 8 leading scholars in composition and rhetoric discussing questions surrounding historical research in the field. I reference this discussion first because it appears to have been an eminent starting point that led to further collaborative events, discussions, and publications regarding researching and writing over histories of rhetoric, including "Writing Histories of Rhetoric Conference at UTA" (1989), which was organized by Vitanza. This conference at the University of Texas Arlington (UTA) would then subsequently lead to *Writing Histories of Rhetoric* (1994), a prominent collection of

essays edited by Vitanza—including Sharon Crowley's concise review of these emerging discussions in "Let Me Get This Straight." As Ballif notes, this time period was quite "prominent and ubiquitous" with such discussions (ibid).

As scholars in the first Octalog make clear, there was a diverse range of perspectives when it comes to writing histories of rhetoric, with each scholar situated on a panel that embodied a kind of spectrum between radical and traditional perspectives for writing, reclaiming, and reconstructing the past—especially in what counts as evidence as Jarratt highlights: "we sort of fall in a range on a spectrum of the degree to which we're interested in facts" (Octalog 22). To trace each point of debate is impossible in the short space provided here. But it needs to be noted that general consensus in the way scholars approached writing histories of rhetoric was not achieved in this event, and that different scholars held different assumptions, methodological approaches, and theoretical aims—with Connors going so far as to say, "I can't help [but] feeling that most of us seemed to be acting out of a kind of intellectual multiple-personality disorder" (Octalog 36). Although unresolved, these differences would emerge and become more prevalent in the proceeding decades to come.

That being said, before moving forward in this chapter, it is important to disclose the underlying assumptions about historical research, and the methodological approach and theoretical aims this chapter aligns with before taking up Welch's call for further analysis into Plato's version of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*.

Historical Assumptions and Emerging Methodologies

In the Prologue to the "Politics of Historiography," James J. Murphy writes, "to put it in Archimedean terms, the place where one stands will have a great influence on what the

historian's lever can move" (Octalog 5). This analogy is apt considering how a scholar's position in time, and the assumptions they hold, can sway how a researcher interprets and frames the past. This idea is further extended and elaborated by Berlin:

> Historians cannot escape this play of power, inherent in all signifying practices. They must instead attempt to locate themselves in this play, to find their predilections and to forward them, making them available to their auditors. . . . All histories are partial accounts, are both biased and incomplete. The good histories admit this and then tell their stories. The bad attempt to dominate the past, pretending at the same time to be mere recorders of the facts (Octalog 11-12)

In many ways, Berlin's perspective on approaching historical research is consistent, and informed by his views on how discourse operates as social-epistemic rhetoric. This position is strongly alluded to in the Octalog, when Berlin comments, "A rhetoric, any rhetoric, ought to be situated within the economic, social, and political conditions of its historical moment, if it is to be understood. . . . This means looking at it within its material conditions" (Octalog 11). What Berlin articulates here is an assumption about language—regarding practice, production, and reception—and that any proper historical understanding must be measured by the historian's ability to analyze how a text, event, or person is situated in a particular time, place, and power structure, that includes social and material conditions in a grand confluence of forces that influence how and why it was produced, said, and received in a particular moment in time.

What makes this stance and assumption about writing histories of rhetoric even more complicated is by virtue of its own self-reflexive awareness to the very forces

present within the historian's moment in time, and how these contemporary influences simultaneously play into the writing of the past. Berlin comments, "The difficulty for the historian is that, even when evidence is available and extensive, the writing of history is itself a rhetorical act. The historian is herself underwriting a version of the normal, of the proper arrangement of classes, races, and genders" (Octalog 11). This perspective, while at first daunting, is in fact validating to how and why histories are complicated, messy, and varied. The pursuit for understanding the past is always mired by the present circumstances, the evidence chosen for consideration, and a whole host of other factors that play into how a history is conceived, or a historiography is constructed. For these reasons, Berlin mentions:

> There are no definitive histories since no historian's ruling perceptual network can ever account for the entire historical field, or even for the field it itself has selected. Thus, there must be multiple histories of rhetoric, each identifying its unique standing place—its grounds for seeing—and the terrain made available from this perspective. (Octalog 6)

And while one accepts this impossible undertaking in attempting to understand the past and write about it in the present, the Octalog—and subsequent discussions, events, and publications since—have helped scholars in composition and rhetoric begin to ask questions and ponder approaches to how we, as a field, move forward in writing histories of rhetoric responsibly. This call for further research is very clearly mentioned by Richard Enos in the Octalog: "Not enough attention, however, is paid to the categories of evidence brought under analysis nor the creation of new methodologies" (Octalog 15). Enos goes on to present a cogent argument for incorporating archaeological methods for

researching historical rhetoric, in what he calls getting your *hands dirty* and stepping out from the historian's *armchair* (ibid). In this approach, Enos points to how physical locations, cultural artifacts, and religious relics might inform the ways in which we understand and write about the historical past. Enos shares:

> Would it be unthinkable to immerse oneself in the study of Greek archaeology and history in order to learn about cultural forces shaping Greek thought and expression? And lastly, would it be unthinkable for us, unlike our colleagues who have done such a good job in the social sciences, to develop new methodologies and new *theories* to try to account for the evidence that they present in the formulation of their theories? (Octalog 15)

Much of Enos's early thoughts on conducting historical research in classical rhetoric would be further developed and articulated 25 years later in an essay entitled, "Theory, Validity, and the Historiography of Classical Rhetoric: A Discussion of Archaeological Rhetoric," published in Michelle Ballif's *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric* (2013). What is striking about Enos's later position is how he aligns with Berlin's call for understanding the epistemic nature of rhetoric, and Berlin's view of how the historian must couch her/his understanding of the past within the material conditions of the historic moment. He writes:

> That is, an examination of material evidence, much of which has come to light only in the last century, can tell us a great deal about the context of rhetorical discourse and enrich our understanding of the social and cultural factors shaping the mentalities of the time in the rhetor's efforts to create

> or build upon a shared view of reality with auditors/readers.
>
> Understanding the epistemic nature of rhetoric, along with an examination of material artifacts, provide a more thorough accounting for rhetoric's history than conventional research procedures can hope to yield. (14-15)

This methodological call for grounding historical research within the material conditions of the past, considered in conjunction with a social-epistemic view of rhetoric, opens up new ground—as well as new theoretical angles for reading, analyzing, and understanding the historical past. And it is within this methodological stance that the proceeding chapter moves forward. But before going on, it is important to discuss how my theoretical lens, based in social-epistemic rhetoric and sophistic theories regarding "nomos" and "physis," will be used to collect textual evidence that falls in line with this methodological approach. For although I was not able to step out from the historian's armchair to visit Athens and walk the path down to the Ilissus River, examine the altar of Boreas, and/or sit within the shade of a plane tree to discern the material conditions of a long ago distant past, the textual details inscribed within the dialogue of the *Phaedrus* present more than enough evidence—when analyzed through a theoretical lens that is sensitive to social and material influences—to bring to the forefront of the text, an old worldview once imagined, constructed, and composed. By stepping into this discursive framework, seeing all the ways that the social and material conditions of the world held sway, new lessons are exposed in the way Plato articulates and conceives his version of rhetoric, both as a practice and as a discipline.

Theory as Method for Selecting and Analyzing Textual Evidence

When I think about theory, and the different critical schools that privilege select theories for reading and analyzing a text, I am reminded of a quote by Kenneth Burke in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. Burke writes: "the point about which the differences in critical schools pivot is not in answers, but in questions" (67). It is for this reason that a rich body of scholarship can emerge over a single text, with scholars looking upon a work, again and again, informed by different theories that lead to different questions, which in turn lead to new perspectives and new insights.

But the questions asked of a text are often not innocuous. Scholars informed by a particular theory (or critical school) will often be guided to ask questions that are undergirded by the theory/theories they ascribe to—be it economic, political, or ideological. As Burke goes on to write in the same section quoted earlier, "Every question selects a field of battle, and in this selection it forms the nature of the answer" (67). This is true not only of literary texts, but of historical texts as well. And when it comes to historical analysis of a text, theory can often operate as both a method and a lens for analysis—influencing not only how information and evidence is selected, but also how it is interpreted and analyzed. As a result, analyzing any historical text is an undertaking that requires sensitive and responsible procedures—disclosing as much as possible the means by which evidence is selected, interpreted, and framed in a broader context for the reader/auditor.

Social-Epistemic Rhetoric and Sophistic Theory for Rereading the Phaedrus

This analysis of Plato's *Phaedrus* is situated and informed by theories connected with social-epistemic rhetoric, and classic sophistic theories of "nomos" and "physis." Social-

epistemic rhetoric (SER) is a theoretical movement in composition and rhetoric that was started, and actively promulgated, by James Berlin—especially in his final work *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* (1996). This theoretical view holds multiple assumptions about language practices and discourse that, when applied as a theory for historical textual analysis, influences how evidence is selected and analyzed. First, this position believes that individual language practices reflect individual "rhetorics" that can be studied within a broader inclusive discipline of rhetoric. These individual language practices in everyday life operate as discursive frameworks that influence subject formation through economic, political, ideological, social, and material forces. And these forces are historically situated and present in the discourse used and acted upon. As Berlin writes:

> 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. These conditions are of an economic, social, and political nature, and they change over time. But they too can be known and acted upon only through the discourse available at any historical moment. Thus, the subject that experiences and the material and social conditions experienced are discursively constituted in historically specific terms. (*Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* 89)

In other words, the language we use mediates our reality, as much as our reality and experiences are mediated through our language. The result of this theoretical view then is the belief that the *Phaedrus* (as a text) reflects the language practice of Plato (as a person)

specifically. The language of the text then is a representation of Plato's everyday signifying practice—and subject formation—within a historically specific moment in time, a time influenced by social, material, economic, and political forces. And these forces can be identified and analyzed by the language of the text. In this way, the theory of SER helps to expose a confluence of forces at play within any text, and provides an initial framework for re-evaluating the way histories are read and analyzed.

In this case, recognizing the social-epistemic nature of Plato's signifying practice in the *Phaedrus* (and the historic situatedness of this practice) is only the first step. The next step is isolating a particular influence—be it political, economic, or ideological—and then analyzing this influence so as to historically re-contextualizing the content of the work.

For this chapter on Plato's *Phaedrus*, my focus is on isolating the influence of the social and material conditions articulated within the text, including: stated locations, descriptive setting, physical objects, as well as myths and beliefs shared. In order to identify this influence, I will be using classic sophistic theories of "nomos" and "physis." These terms were actively debated by sophists of the 5th and 4th century BCE (Kerferd 111; Guthrie 55), and they refer to the observable distinction between socially constructed beliefs and norms (nomos), and the physical, natural, material environment of reality (physis). Kathleen Welch defines these terms:

> **Nomos/Physis**. Intertwined concepts that recur in classical rhetoric. **Nomos** signifies law, convention, more, that which is human made, habit, while **physis** indicates nature, or that which contains essence or reality. (her emphasis 169)

My use of these Greek terms (as theory) is tentative, recognizing that no singular meaning of the words exist but that they are rather fluid ideas, malleable and altered by different authors in different times and in different contexts. Though this challenge exists, Kathleen Welch presents a scholarly stance that recognizes this uncertainty while providing space for examining the implications of key terms when doing historical research. As she writes: "My own appropriation of keywords seeks to follow not traditional philosophical discussions but the writings of Williams and of Burke: to maintain ambiguity and complexity and resonance" (75). By applying nomos and physis as theoretical concepts to reading Plato's *Phaedrus*, a careful analysis can be conducted in understanding how the social and material conditions of the dialogue are playing an influential role—one previously overlooked by other scholars.

By approaching the dialogue from this perspective, we not only discover how the discourse of the text defines Plato's world, but also how that world positions and defines Plato. And by stepping into this discursive framework of Plato's *Phaedrus*, seeing all the ways that the social and material conditions of the world held sway, new lessons are exposed in the way Plato articulates and conceives his version of rhetoric, both as a practice and as a discipline.

A Setting of Contrasts: A Walk Outside the City Walls

> [T]he Ancient Greeks invested in landscape in a way we can only begin to imagine: not only was visual stimulus, visual expression fundamental to society, but the world they saw was a place where spirits resided, a place full of signs and symbols. One begins to realize that the Platonic setting of ancient Athens was no mere convenient backdrop, but a four-dimensional

> landscape that Socrates, in real life as well as in Plato's imagination, almost certainly, vigorously occupied.
>
> —Bettany Hughes, *The Hemlock Cup* xxiv

The *Phaedrus* is one of the few dialogues where Plato writes of Socrates outside the city walls of Athens. This fact seems inconspicuous at first, but when Plato makes a point in the dialogue to emphasize Socrates's awe-inspired behavior outside the walls as they come to a stopping point along the Ilissus, an important point of contrast is created between Socrates and Phaedrus. Socrates has just finished describing the beautiful setting, highlighting the shade of the plane tree, the sweet perfume of flowers blossoming, the choral hymn of summer cicadas, and the gentle slope of grass along the banks (230b-230c). Within this description Socrates shares how the spot is consecrated with figurines and statuettes that are sacred to some nymphs and Achelous (ibid). This awe-like enthusiasm surprises Phaedrus, who responds: "You, my friend, really appear the most extraordinary sort of person. You behave like someone being led around a strange place, as you say, and not like a local. It comes of your not leaving the city to cross the border or even, it seems to me, to go outside the wall at all" (230c6-230d3). This difference in regard to nature is further reinforced when Socrates replies to Phaedrus that for him, as a lover of wisdom, the countryside cannot teach him anything—only people (230d5). For Socrates, his world is ordinarily consumed with the business inside the city walls, with conversing and learning from others.

The contrast is subtle but clear, observable not only in the difference of opinion about the natural world outside the city walls, but also in the physical division established between the polis and the countryside as Socrates and Phaedrus walk together. For

Phaedrus, the countryside is ordinary. It is a common place for strolling. For Socrates, the countryside is magical and enchanting, connected with the statuettes and figurines of divine agents. In this way, the setting for the dialogue—and speeches soon to be made—is situated in new territory, no longer in the presence of other men typical of speeches within the city walls, but occurring between two individuals secluded along the banks of the Ilissus, surrounded by mythic and divine forces.

Many have commented on this setting, referring to it as a site of seduction based around the subject matter of love in the speeches. And although I believe there is good reason to see and note the intimacy established in this secluded spot—especially as it relates to the subject of love—I believe the setting is playing a larger role in situating the three speeches on love. It is within this space—this environmental setting—where place and myth intersect, and where nature (physis) and socio-cultural beliefs (nomos) of the dialogue are directly and indirectly called into question. It is a space primed for reflection on the interplay between nomos and physis. And from this perspective, Socrates's comment that the countryside cannot teach him anything soon becomes complicated and undermined as he and Phaedrus encounter a divine presence beneath the plane tree.

The Myth and Altar of Boreas

After walking outside the city walls, Socrates and Phaedrus spot a plane tree to sit beneath and continue their dialogue. As they approach the plane tree, Phaedrus asks Socrates if this is the place where Boreas is said to have seized Oreithyia (229b5). Socrates replies, "No, it was from a place two or three stades lower down, where one crosses over to the district of Agra; and there, somewhere, there's an altar of Boreas" (229cI). This prompts Phaedrus to ask an important question as to whether Socrates truly

believes in this story. This brief interlude begins an important discussion between Socrates and Phaedrus over what is real, factual, and accurate, as opposed to what is illusory, fictitious, or socially believed—a discussion predicated around the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia. Robert Grave's *The Greek Myths* provides a review of this myth[10]:

> Oreithyia, daughter of Erectheus, King of Athens, and his wife Praxithea, was one day whirling in a dance beside the river Ilissus, when Boreas, son of Astraeus and Eos, and brother of the South and West Winds, carried her off to a rock near the river Ergines where, wrapped in a mantle of dark clouds, he ravished her. (170)

In this account, Graves goes on to discuss how Boreas was madly in love with Oreithyia and constantly sued for her hand, but her father, King Erectheus, continually "put him off with vain promises" (170). This resistance by Erectheus culminates into overwhelming emotional stress, which leads Boreas to violently seize Oreithyia and have his way with her[11].

Because the setting is not located at the altar of Boreas, a reader might be left wondering why Plato felt the need to include this place and mythic reference. One simple explanation might be that Plato is using Phaedrus to reference this location as a way of foreshadowing the argument on love about to be shared with Lysias's speech—an argument that highlights love's negative attributes. Boreas's intense love did not end well for his lover, Oreithyia. And with Phaedrus calling to mind this oral myth, a reader might be more readily primed to accept the argument of Lysias's speech. But when Socrates clarifies that their current location is *not* near this altar, and when pressed to discuss his

beliefs on the validity of this myth, readers are faced with a disconnect between place and myth, between reality and cultural belief, between nomos and physis.

Questioning Belief and Reality in the Myth and Altar of Boreas

The term nomos is a word that has a long and complicated history in classic Greek usage. Susan Jarratt highlights its origin in Homeric literature as "pasture," but traces how it later evolved to refer to "habitual practice, usage or custom" (41). She goes on to write that "Common to both forms [of the term] is the importance of human agency: in the first case, in the marking out and distributing of land; and in the second, in explicitly human ratification of norms as binding" (41). W.K.C. Guthrie elaborates on this connection of the term. In his study of the sophists, he identifies the term to mean something that is "believed in, practiced, or held to be right" (55). In the general sense of the term, nomos is rooted in human belief; nomos are conventions that emanate from an individual or society.

Physis is a term that Guthrie writes as equating to "reality" (55). G.B. Kerferd emphasizes how "the Ionian scientist came to use [the term] for the whole of reality" (111). As a term for reality, physis is often seen in contrast to the human conventions associated with nomos, and was an important part of the intellectual discussion by "wise people" of Plato's time. Guthrie elaborates on how these two terms played into Sophistic arguments connected with myths, gods, and appropriate political practices:

> Discussions of religion turned on whether gods existed by *physis*—in reality—or only by *nomos*; of political organization, or whether states arose by divine ordinance, by natural necessity or by *nomos*; of cosmopolitanism, on whether divisions within the human race are natural

> or only a matter of *nomos*; of equality, on whether the rule of one man over another (slavery) or one nation over another (empire) is natural and inevitable, or only by *nomos*; and so on. (57-58)

As we see, nomos and physis were critical ideas that influenced how people began to understand their world, their beliefs, and their customs. Individuals were attempting to discern the divisions between socially constructed norms/conventions/beliefs, and their physical/natural/environmental counterparts that encompass the rest of reality.

When Phaedrus asks whether Socrates believes in this story, Phaedrus is calling into question Socrates's stance on the common oral beliefs of their time (as nomos). Socrates replies, "If I disbelieved it, as wise people do, I'd not be extraordinary" (229c7). This response provides the reader with a point of reference into the social conditions of the time, namely in a prevailing influence of questioning the old beliefs and cultural myths as human constructs of nomos. Socrates proceeds to explain that this type of wisdom (explaining myths) forces one to have to go on to explain Chimeras, Hippocentaurs, and other mythic creatures and stories. Those who pursue such clever rationalizations may find them attractive, but as Socrates shares with Phaedrus, they represent a "boorish kind of wisdom" (229e3).

By responding in this way, Plato is positioning Socrates against these so-called "wise people" in a manner that paints such intellectual pursuits as trite and trivial, but it also avoids the very real intellectual work that many sophists brought to bear with such questions[12]. For Phaedrus to ask Socrates whether he believes in the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia, Plato is calling into question the division between belief (nomos) and reality (physis), between his philosophy espoused through Socrates, and those of his

contemporaries, invoked in the coy words of Phaedrus. And this compelling division and contrast of worldviews is fully seen in the eventual setting of the dialogue, under the plane tree, and how the three speeches unfold, twist, and tangle within this setting.

A Plane Tree Setting: Discourse Rooted in Myth (nomos) and Place (physis)

As they approach the plane tree, Socrates says: "By Hera, a beautiful stopping-place! The plane-tree here is altogether spreading and tall . . . . To judge by the figurines and statuettes, the spot seems to be sacred to some nymphs and to Achelous" (230bI-cI). In this spot, we discover sacred shrines to Achelous (the god of freshwater rivers), and nymphs (spirits within nature). It is in this location that Phaedrus begins to share Lysias' speech that argues why the "nonlover" should be privileged over the "lover." The argument rests on the logic that lovers will often be beset with jealousy, guarding their beloved from conversation with others and keeping them apart from the good of others. Phaedrus shares,

> It is for this very reason that they divert their loved ones from associating with others, fearing that those who possess wealth will outdo them with their money, and that the educated will come off better in terms of intellect; and they are on their guard against the power of anyone who possess any other sort of advantage. (232c5-dI)

Throughout the speech, it becomes apparent that by privileging the "nonlover" with such persuasive logic, Phaedrus has become moved by the words of Lysias. In this way, Lysias has convinced Phaedrus why succumbing to the advances of someone less desirable (but able to provide benefits), is actually a good thing. Here, the crafty design of Lysias is revealed with the type of logic that is not altogether unlike the rationalizations

surrounding the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia—calling to question the human conventions and norms surrounding the beliefs of love. And in so doing, love is placed in the realm of nomos, a constructed belief that can be rationalized in deceptive ways.

After sharing Lysias' speech, Phaedrus is excited to hear whether Socrates is as equally moved by the words. Socrates, unimpressed by the speech, highlights its repetitious logic in which Lysias is essentially saying the same thing again and again in different ways. Socrates says, "indeed he seemed to me to be behaving with a youthful swagger, showing off his ability to say the same things now in this way and now in that, and to say them excellently either way" (235a8). This response leads Phaedrus into goading Socrates to giving a better speech along the same line of argument as Lysias. When Socrates refuses, Phaedrus swears an oath "in the presence of this tree" (236e3). It is a solemn oath, but one that is ironically undermined by Phaedrus's choice in swearing by the plane tree (Yunis 110). Socrates responds, "You wretch, you! How well you've found the way to force a lover of speeches to do whatever you tell him to do" (236e4-e5). Oaths delivered are not taken lightly—especially if you believe you're on sacred ground (230bI-cI). And with this oath, Socrates is forced into giving a speech that perpetuates Lysias's argument. Before he begins, Socrates covers his head and invokes the Muses and calls upon the epithet ("take part with me") connected with the musical people known as Ligurians (237a9-a10).

Many scholars have highlighted the dramatic and parodic element of Socrates invoking the Muses here (along with the Ligurians), but there is an aspect that Yunis makes note in his commentary that calls attention to a contrast of positioning between Socrates and Lysias: "The appeal for divine aid also accords with the orientation towards

the gods that characterizes S.'s values (249c1-d3, 273e3-274a3) in contrast with the purely human frame of reference of Lysias' speech" (112). By beginning with this orientation, calling upon the Muses, Socrates is subtly able to pull Phaedrus (and the reader) into appropriating Lysias's argument within an environmental space (or physis) that is within a divine "reality," an aspect that suddenly makes Plato's choice of having Phaedrus swear upon the plane tree more relevant and serious than at first reading. Here, Socrates' belief that the countryside cannot teach him anything (230d4) changes in a dramatic way. The site comes to life by outside forces. And this divine reality is reinforced as Socrates's speech proceeds.

As Socrates gives his first speech, he becomes almost possessed in the process. Both Phaedrus and Socrates become aware of this. At one point, Socrates says to Phaedrus, "Then listen to me in silence. For the spot seems really to be a divine one, so if by any chance I become possessed by Nymphs as my speech proceeds, don't be surprised; as it is I'm already close to uttering in dithyrambs" (238c9-d3). This possession holds particular significance in relation to the setting of dialogue, the myths common to the time, and Plato's positioning of what his practice of rhetoric is in relation to the persuasive display of logic in Lysias's speech. Yunis unpacks this when he writes:

> [T]o be 'seized by nymphs' was a recognized condition in Plato's day in which nymphs of a particular location, in Attica always in the company of Pan (Parker 1996: 163-8), took possession of a person and endowed him with extraordinary powers such as prophecy or poetic composition (Connor 1998, Görgemanns 1993: 137-40). S.'s warning of impending nympholepsy, though ironic, indicates the intensity and unexpectedness of

> his extraordinary rhetorical effort (241eI-4); and it suggests the divine source of effective discourse that goes somehow beyond *techne*. (115)

Socrates is quickly swept up by his speech. The setting, with statuettes and figurines honoring the nymphs, are no longer quaint details but active agents, goading and inspiring Socrates on. And out of this display of divine influence, the reader becomes witness to a spiritually-charged world (physis) that supersedes the common base beliefs (nomos) being questioned by "wise people." It is here that we become witness to the power that comes with the practice of rhetoric to move, alter, and transform a person through discourse. With Plato setting the scene in this way, by having Socrates actively overcome by divine forces, we gain insight into Plato's coming argument for why a rhetoric (as a techne) left in the wrong hands, is a dangerous art. The logic of Lysias's speech, clever as it is, when left to an unsuspecting audience, can be twisted to inspire a person towards uncouth values and beliefs. And this distorted inspiration by Lysias is fully seen in Socrates's first speech.

Throughout this speech, Socrates perpetuates Lysias's distorted notions of love, presenting extensive arguments for why "lovers" are destructive to their beloved, stopping just short of praising the nonlover. When he finishes, Socrates quickly becomes aware of a grand offence he has committed in uttering this speech. His personal daemon stops him short of leaving the site. By slandering love, Socrates has offended the god of love—a belief that goes beyond nomos, where the god of love exists in reality (physis). Socrates claims, "But if Love is, as indeed he is, a god, or something divine, he would not be anything bad; whereas the two speeches we had just now spoke of him as if he were

like that" (242e2-e4). This leads into Socrates second speech, the Palinode in which Socrates intends to rectify his offence.

The Palinode: Regaining Sight to the Blind

The Palinode begins with Socrates referencing Homer and Stesichorus. At this time, it was believed that Homer unknowingly went blind for speaking ill about Helen of Troy. Similarly, the sixth-century poet, Stesichorus, also went blind, but knowing the cause of his offense, he quickly composed a verse recanting his words about Helen. This verse was known as the Palinode. As Socrates shares with Phaedrus, shortly after composing the verse, Stesichorus regained his sight. The opening to Stesichorus' verse goes:

> This speech is not genuine:
>
> She did not go on the well-benched ships,
>
> Nor did she come to Pergamon of Troy. (243b)

Using this form, Socrates begins his Palinode in similar fashion, going so far as to mimic the opening. Socrates says, "And it must be spoken as follows: *The speech is not genuine* which asserts that, when the lover is around, one must rather gratify the nonlover, on the grounds that the one is mad, the other of sound mind" (my emphasis 244a2-4). This begins Socrates' speech and defense for why love is a god, divine, and all good. He goes on to share that any argument that besmirches love, or goads, rationalizes, or logically distorts another into denying its blessed madness, does so at the gravest risk—impiety. Socrates says to Phaedrus:

> In this way, then, they [the two speeches] were at fault about Love; and still their simplemindedness was quite urbane, while saying nothing healthy or true, to put on a solemn air as though they were something, if

> perchance by deceiving some little human beings they will enjoy good reputation among them. (243a)

Socrates shares that the two speeches, though clever in logic, has led them astray into beliefs (nomos) that go against the god of love in reality (physis). And for what purpose or goal were the speeches founded upon? Socrates shares that the speeches were founded upon "nothing healthy or true," and that its end goal appears to be nothing more than to gain a "good reputation" (ibid).

By situating the dialogue outside the city walls, under the plane tree, and near honorific deities, the reader is faced with considering the forces beyond the social orders and customs they are familiar with (nomos). In this way, Plato draws the reader into a setting, environment, and reality (physis) that is both aligned and consecrated with the mythic-religious beliefs of the time. By explaining the divine madness of love, the eternal life of the soul, the white and dark horse chariot analogy in the soul's progressive development to soar with the gods, Plato takes great care in painting a reality (physis) that compels the reader to be mindful to discourse (whether spoken or written) that is not either "healthy" or "true," for the actions and beliefs committed will either elevate or denigrate the development of the soul. This connection to proper discourse is especially noted towards the end of the Palinode, when Socrates shares with Phaedrus in a prayer:

> And if in the previous speech Phaedrus and I said anything rough to you, blame Lysias, the father of the speech, and make him desist from such speeches; turn him to philosophy . . . so that his lover here may also no longer waver ambiguously, as now, but conduct his life simply in reference to Love with philosophic speeches. (257b)

Whether ironic, coincidental, or purposeful, this Palinode can be read as helping the blind regain their sight. It is a speech that—more than recanting the two earlier speeches on love—sets the foundation for Plato's vision for what his rhetoric looks like in relation to the practice of "wise people," like Lysias. Viewed on its own, this speech is a sermonic explication for outlining heaven and earth, exposing the eternal nature of the soul from the body, and exclaiming the rewards of living a virtuous life over giving into our more base desires.

Within this setting, and analyzed in relation to nomos and physis, we discern how Plato's practice of rhetoric, as observed by the three speeches, is situated in a world that is divine by his own views. It is within these grounds that Plato leads his reader away from the persuasive logic of Lysias (based in nomos), and sets the stage for how an ideal form of rhetoric would operate within his worldview (based in physis)—a worldview set in contrast to the sophists. In "The Art of Psychagogic Rhetoric," Harvey Yunis elaborates on this point: "In the inquiry into good discourse conducted by S. and Ph. (259e2 – 274b6) Plato sets forth how rhetoric can be constituted as a *techne* and how sophistic rhetoric fails as a *techne*" (10). Yet this division between these two forms of rhetoric, as observed by Yunis, is only fully seen by Plato's unique vision for the world. G.B.Kerferd outlines and extends this worldly division as intensely intellectual:

> [W]e can say with some certainty that Plato was not satisfied that the arguments of these opponents [i.e. Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus and Hippias] . . . and that he saw it as his own task to develop a new and fuller vision of reality in order to arrive at the kind of answers that were required. (55-56)

This "fuller vision of reality" is quite dramatically made clear with the Palinode, and the prayer to the god of love. It is here, with this prayer, that Plato admonishes others to heed impiety and be mindful to discourse, rhetoric, and speech-making that is based around clever rationalization that may distort an audience into uncouth beliefs (nomos), and overlooks the religious/mythic beliefs that govern, at least for Plato, the real physical world (as physis). This ends the first half of the dialogue.

* * *

Although much could be analyzed in the second half of the dialogue, this research focuses on the first half only, with the three speeches illustrating Plato's rhetoric in practice. As George Kennedy highlights, the three speeches of the first half, and the extended theoretical discussion of rhetorical principles of writing and speech-making in the second half, properly illustrate a descriptive rhetoric alongside a prescriptive compendium of relevant topics "analogous to a rhetorical handbook" (74). For this reason, I have limited my analysis to the first half only.

A Place Composed Under the Shade of a Plane Tree

> And if we keep this always in mind, we are reminded that every document bequeathed us by history must be treated as a *strategy for encompassing a situation*.
>
> —Kenneth Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form* 109

Thomas Conley writes: "A survey of Classical Greek rhetorics shows that there is no one, single notion of rhetoric that can be called typical or dominant in the period. . . . In the *Phaedrus*, Plato has Socrates lay out a vision of a legitimate rhetoric, founded on dialectical reasoning, as a way of communicating the Truth effectively" (23). This

"legitimate rhetoric" of Plato as Conley writes, positioned in relation to sophistic notions of rhetoric, I believe is a contentious way of framing the work Plato achieves. But it appears this has become typical in the conversation surrounding Plato's version of rhetoric. Scholars such as Conley, Yunis, Bizzell and Herzberg[13], often position Plato's rhetoric in this kind of dichotomy of right and wrong, of true and false—leaving an either/or way of reading, so that readers either accept or reject Plato's vision of rhetoric based on their own epistemological presuppositions.

When we cast off these contemporary frames of reference, avoiding the decontextualization that Welch warns against, we are confronted with approaching Plato on his own ground, with his own positioned beliefs of the world. This may seem straightforward, but it is a position towards historical figures that has only recently been embraced. During the first Octalog, Richard Enos shares a comment that illustrates the unconscious ways contemporary studies in rhetoric can generalize and distort select figures in history (*not to mention the privileged position and influence of Aristotelian thought mentioned earlier*):

> A few days ago, one of my colleagues, Linda Flower, was talking to me about some ideas I was sharing with her about this and I was categorizing people as "presocratic philosophers" and then "rhetoricians." And she said, "What would happen if you just didn't have those labels and looked at what they said?" I think that sort of cogent point of view is something that I have to constantly keep in mind, because I recognize I am a product of Aristotelian thought and I'm trying to understand other ways of thinking and how they compare. (24)

This frame of mind allows for a more inclusive and sensitive platform to research, study, and analyze the diverse figures in rhetoric's historical past. And by reviewing Plato's unique practice of rhetoric, in light of current research, new insights are ascertained in looking at how the material and social conditions of the past influenced Plato's ideas about rhetoric as a practice and a discipline.

In rereading Plato's *Phaedrus* through the theoretical framework of social-epistemic rhetoric, and specifically the lens of nomos and physis, we discover that the setting of the dialogue and the myths shared play an active role in how the three speeches unfold, and how Plato's version of rhetoric is observed. It is within this space that we discover how the social and material conditions of the text, discursively constructed, specifically outline socially constructed beliefs about the world. And when re-read within this discursive framework, Plato's vision for rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* helps contemporary readers begin to question their own socially constructed beliefs about the world, and how language practices crafted in light of this, might help discern how to build bridges with others who may have divergent worldviews from our own. In this way, two might sit beneath a familiar plane tree and discursively construct common ground, even if situated worlds apart.

Notes

[1]Rhetorical scholars often cite the issue of disunity in the *Phaedrus*. This perception of disunity is focused in the structure of the dialogue—often narrowed to the three speeches given in the first half of the dialogue, with irresolute connections to the second half of the dialogue, dealing with writing and oral speech. This disunity is mentioned by James H. Nichols Jr., in *Plato: Phaedrus*, where he writes:

> If we seek to apply Socrates' view that a speech or argument should have a unity like that of an animal, with all its parts suitably adapted to the whole, we at once confront the fact that the unity of the *Phaedrus* is not readily apparent and that various readers have taken very different views of how or even whether all the parts go together to constitute one whole. (93)

Nichols then performs a close reading of different parts of the dialogue, helping the reader see how various sections relate to larger issues of rhetoric.

In the *Art of Persuasion in Ancient Greece*, George Kennedy argues the two halves as representing two methods of teaching rhetoric, with the first encompassing speeches and the second expounding upon theory and topical categories found in rhetorical handbooks:

> The *Phaedrus* may be divided into two parts which correspond strikingly to the two methods of rhetorical instruction current in classical Greece. From the beginning to 257b6 is principally a small collection of specimen speeches. From 257b7 to the end is a theoretical discussion analogous to a

> rhetorical handbook, which touches, often critically, upon the usual topics, including the definition of rhetoric, its parts, and forms of argument. (74)

Another scholar who addresses this issue of disunity is Richard Weaver in his *Ethics of Rhetoric*. Weaver writes, "Students of this justly celebrated dialogue have felt uncertain of its unity of theme, and the tendency has been to designate it broadly as a discussion of the ethical and beautiful" (3). Weaver mends this perceived disunity by arguing that previous readings have been "too literal and too topical" and that the dialogue "from beginning to end, [is] about one thing, which is the nature of rhetoric" (3). Weaver writes how the three speeches about love in the first half, come to represent—"allegorically"—rhetoric's true nature in humanity's ability to use written and spoken discourse: "What began as a simple account of passion becomes by transcendence an allegory of all speech" (26). Other scholars, such as Kahn (373) and Nehamas (352), see the disunity of the dialogue as illustrating a change in Plato's view of philosophy (qtd. in Kastely 138).

[2]In Elizabeth A. Shiltz's article, "Two Chariots: The Justification of the Best Life in the *Katha Upanishad* and Plato's *Phaedrus*," Shitlz focuses on the "chariot" analogy of the soul mentioned in the *Phaedrus*, as well as the chariot described in the *Katha Upanishad*, as a way of outlining aspects of a "complex moral psychology" (451).

[3]In *Dissemination*, Jacques Derrida applies his theories of deconstruction to reading the *Phaedrus*. It is this reading that operates as one of his seminal works to deconstruction as a critical paradigm, advancing post-structuralism beyond Sausserean linguistics and outlining a theory of language that dissolves traditional Western-based notions of written and spoken discourse:

> In the course of this critique, Derrida does not simply reverse this [Western-based] value system and say that writing is better than speech. Rather, he attempts to show that the very possibility of opposing the two terms on the basis of presence vs. absence or immediacy vs. representation is an illusion, since speech is already structured by difference and distance as much as writing is. (Johnson qtd. in Derrida ix)

Derrida's focus with the dialogue is on the "Pharmacia" (-akos/akon), a term/character/idea that plays a critical role in the dialogue, and one that Derrida exposes as problematic. Pharmacia is the root term for our current notion of pharmacy. In its Greek meaning, it is a loaded term, one that stands for both poison and remedy. By exposing the problematic nature of the term in the dialogue, Derrida is able to decenter the text, using the "pharmakon" to unravel any notions of a stabilized reading of the *Phaedrus*. His argument is more complicated than this, exposing—and simultaneously dissolving—a broad array of Western-based assumptions when it comes to the primacy of spoken versus written discourse and our beliefs of a root meaning in language.

[4]In Page duBois's article, "Phallocentrism and its Subversion in Plato's *Phaedrus*," we see a postmodern feminist critique of the dialogue, largely directed in response to Derrida's reading. As she writes, "Although Derrida's reading is brilliant and illuminating, it is, I think blind to its own phallocentrism to the extent that it fails to acknowledge Plato's desire to appropriate maternity to the male philosopher" (92). Through mythic and literary representations of Greek life as socio-cultural practices and linguistic analysis, duBois argues how women are made present by Plato in the dialogue, specifically in ways that blend sexual boundaries and polymorphous desires of male on

male, male on female, and male desires of being female so as "to be object of male desires" (102). In one section duBois argues how the image of Socrates veiling himself before his first speech, acts as allusion to Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (1071-1080), "where Herakles, veiled and dying, calls himself female, thelus in his weakness" (97). This indirect presence, duBois argues, subverts the dominant-paternalistic readings of the text, revealing how women, as pharmakon, operate in a way that "may appeal to the [male] audience's repressed desires to identify with the female, to use its own desire to cleanse it, to return it to a homoerotic philosophical practice where women have no place" (102). duBois concludes that once this presence is revealed, similar to the presence of writing that Derrida expounds, women can never be fully expelled (ibid).

[5]In an article published in 1994, Kathryn Morgan takes a closer look at one particular element of the *Phaedrus*, exposing how one metaphor uncovers an important underlying social context of meaning. The article is entitled, "Socrates and Gorgias at Delphi and Olympia: Phaedrus," published by *The Classical Quarterly*. During the dialogue, there is a particular exchange of words between Socrates and Phaedrus that have puzzled scholars. Morgan cites the passage (235c-d), "Phaedrus will dedicate a life-sized golden statue of himself at Delphi as the nine archons swore to do, and will even add one of Socrates" (375). Phaedrus means this offer as a sort of bribe if Socrates can do a speech better than Lysias, but the reference is seen as problematic. Citing Aristotle's *Constitution of the Athenians*, Morgan writes, "that the archons swore to dedicate a gold statue if [someone] transgressed the laws" (375). In the dialogue, this bribe is compounded when Phaedrus goes further, making an even greater offer to have a statue

built at the Cypselidae at Olympia. In the article, Morgan sheds light on why these references are important, and what role they play in understanding the overall dialogue.

[6]In Martha Beck's "Carl Jung and Plato's *Phaedrus*," an interesting reading is performed in understanding Socrates as a "literary character," one that "represents a psychological archetype" (1). Beck applies Jung's theory of the "ego," as consciousness, and the "shadow" being unconsciousness (made up of good and dark desires), as a way uncovering how Socrates speeches/actions within the dialogue stand as archetypical to humanities constant desire to achieve "union of emotion and intellect, conscious and unconscious" (11). Beck is adept in her psychoanalytic approach to reading the *Phaedrus*, advancing Jung's theories and bridging concepts between philosophy and psychology.

[7]Historically, Scaevola was Cicero's teacher and mentor (May and Wisse 14). By opening *De Oratore* with Scaevola referencing Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, we see what appears to be an indirect allusion of Cicero playing the part of Plato as author for *De Oratore*.

[8]It should be mentioned that Richard Weaver is one scholar who avidly advanced a Platonic version of rhetoric. See chapter, "The Phaedrus and the Nature of Rhetoric," within *The Ethics of Rhetoric*.

[9]To highlight just a few recent studies on the *Phaedrus* since Welch's work, see Frentz, Kastely, Schiltz, Morgan, among other scholars referenced throughout.

[10] Graves references this story as attributed to "Apollodorus: iii 15. 1-2; [and] Apollonius Rhodius: i. 212 ff" (171).

[11] Many might wonder why an altar would be erected for a god who committed such a violent act perpetrated on an Athenian princess, but Boreas was a god revered by the Athenians for his hand in defeating a fleet of Xerxes forces with a sever storm during the Persian invasion of Greece. For more information, see Graeme Nicholson *Plato's Phaedrus* (15-16).

[12] Nicholson provides an interesting perspective on this, writing: "Whereas Socrates in the *Euthyphro* and the *Republic* is pictured as being fully on the side of the contemporary Enlightenment, in its suppression of myth, the *Phaedrus* depicts him instead as no longer willing to follow the *sophoi* in that direction. He is happy to preserve mythic discourse" (19).

[13]Bizzell and Herzberg have described this tension found between Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias* as an articulation between a "true and false rhetoric" (28).

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL-ONTOLOGICAL SIGNIFICATIONS: SUBJECT FORMATION IN AUTOMOTIVE ADVERTISEMENTS

> All philosophers suffer from the same defect, in that they start with present-day man and think they can arrive at their goal by analyzing him. Instinctively they let "man" hover before them as an aeterna veritas [eternal truth], something unchanging in all turmoil, a secure measure of things. But everything the philosopher asserts about man is basically no more than a statement about man within a very limited time span. A lack of historical sense is the congenital defect of all philosophers. Some unwittingly even take the most recent form of man, as it developed under the imprint of certain religions or even certain political events, as the fixed form from which one must proceed. They will not understand that man has evolved, that the faculty of knowledge has also evolved, while some of them even permit themselves to spin the whole world from out of this faculty of knowledge.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* 14

Nietzsche makes numerous points that are worth considering in the epigraph above—especially for scholars pursuing research into ontological studies. As his text suggest, all attempts at understanding humanity through previous philosophical arguments are

specifically *human* constructs, embedded and influenced by political and religious events of its own social conditions, so that any prior and/or contemporary analysis of humanity will always be limited to its own purview in time. It should be noted that the range of Nietzsche's critique here is not limited to previous arguments about what it means to be human specifically, but the entire scope of philosophy and the human condition—where epistemology, ontology and metaphysics are wrapped up together—and all within Nietzsche's aim against philosophers. As Nietzsche writes, "permit[ting] themselves [philosophers] to spin the whole world from out of this faculty of knowledge" (ibid). But the "congenital defect" that Nietzsche warns against is the lack of historical perspective, recognizing that each philosopher is confined within a particular time, place, and social condition. As Nietzsche writes, "everything the philosopher asserts about man is basically no more than a statement about man within a *very limited* time span" (ibid).

Nietzsche's somber indictment for philosophy's attempts at understanding the human condition is stark and somewhat despondent. At the end of the section referenced earlier, Nietzsche writes, "But everything has evolved; there are *no eternal facts*, nor are there any absolute truths. Thus *historical philosophizing* is necessary henceforth, and the virtue of modesty as well" (14-15). What Nietzsche articulates here is a verdict regarding humanity's attempts at self-understanding—essentially, grounding the idea that there are no pervasive, timeless, or "eternal" truths regarding the human condition, or what it means to be human. And that each argument made from the past (or present) is an argument made within a particular time, by a particular person, within a particular social setting, and influenced by a confluence of forces. This is a salient point to consider here, and openly admit, before endeavoring in an analysis that attempts to uncover how

automotive advertisements have social-ontological implications in influencing subject formation as a recurrent signifying practice.

Social-Epistemic Rhetoric: A Theoretical Stance on Subject Formation

Nietzsche's position is intuitively prescient to contemporary theories regarding social-epistemic rhetoric (SER), a theoretical movement in composition and rhetoric that was started by James Berlin and most extensively outlined in his final work *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* (1996). Like Nietzsche's views stated earlier, SER is positioned by assumptions that do not readily support "eternal truths" when it comes to understanding and analyzing the evolving arguments of what it means to be human. Rather, SER is based on the idea that meaning (and truth) is constructed through language. As Berlin writes,

> Knowledge does not exist apart from language. Thus, the task of the interlocutor is not simply to find the appropriate words to communicate—to contain—a nonverbal reality. Language, instead, embodies and generates knowledge, and there is no knowledge without language. (*Rhetoric and Reality* 167)

Because of this inherent relationship between knowledge and language, all truth and meaning is essentially a discursive construct—one that is entirely an *all too human* construct. As a result, these discursive constructs create frameworks by which people see and understand the world they live in. As Berlin writes:

> 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.

> These conditions are of an economic, social, and political nature, and they change over time. But they too can be known and acted upon only through the discourse available at any historical moment. Thus, the subject that experiences and the material and social conditions experienced are discursively constituted in historically specific terms. (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 89)

In other words, the world—and our experience within the world—is mediated through our language, which essentially creates discursive frameworks that inform all aspects of our lived experience. And these discursive frameworks are not innocuous. They are historically situated, and informed by political, economic, social and material conditions. And it is these external conditions embedded into our discourse that holds particular significance.

The central tenet to SER is "the study and critique of signifying practices in their relation to subject formation within the framework of economic, social, and political conditions" (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 83). Much of Berlin's work is focused on exposing these conditions embedded in our language practices, so as to engage in a postmodernist debate about how these ideological forces facilitate unequal power dynamics, and perpetuate social, economic, and political inequality. SER then is a theoretical stance that exposes how these influences can be identified and analyzed by the "discourse available at any historical moment" (ibid). But more than this, SER provides a means to analyze how these embedded influences in discourse hold implications to subject formation (ontologically speaking)—albeit, one limited in scope and generalizability, but nonetheless, one that exposes what would otherwise be hidden. With

this in mind, one becomes open to see the historic social, political, and material conditions that structure and influences our lived experience—while simultaneously becoming aware of how one might retain agency in subverting these influences. As Berlin writes about SER:

> From this perspective, the subject is the point of intersection and influence of various conflicted discourses—discourses about class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, and the life. Of equal importance, the subject in turn acts upon these discourses. The individual is the location of a variety of significations, but is also an agent of change, not simply an unwitting product of external discursive and material forces. The subject negotiates and resists codes rather than simply accommodating them. (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 85)

In this way, discursive signifying practices present clear forms of evidence into a historically situated moment in time, one that is instilled by a confluence of outside forces that are negotiated, resisted, or perpetuated by individuals—individuals that are not only influenced by these outside forces, but simultaneously agents capable of reifying or resisting these outside influences. Perhaps, this is the "philosophical historicizing" that Nietzsche so unapologetically stressed, if but to retain a sense of "modesty" with beginning to understand humanity at any particular moment in time, or with any particular text (*Human, All Too Human* 15).

SER Assumptions about Language Practices

Before continuing, a few points need to be outlined on how SER views discourse and language practices—especially before narrowing in on advertisements as a type of text and signifying practice isolated within its own historic conditions.

This theoretical position is informed by the assumption that there is no single idea of language as a "monolithic entity" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 167), but rather holds the belief that there is a diverse range of languages and signifying practices spanning all segments of society. As a result, language practices are varied and encompass multiple communities. Berlin clarifies this when he writes,

> For epistemic rhetoric, language is not, however, a single, monolithic entity. Within each society there is a host of languages, each serving as the center of a particular discourse community. Each community—whether made up of biologists, composition teachers, autoworkers, ward members, or baseball fans—is built around a language peculiar to itself so that membership in the group is determined by the ability to use the language according to the prescribed method. (*Rhetoric and Reality* 167).

These emergent and diverse language practices are shaped, formed, and perpetuated by a common understanding, accessibility, and participation within a group—cultivating discourse communities. But it is important to mention that these different signifying practices can be identified at increasingly broader social and cultural levels, encompassing corporate cultures, political rallies, different social groups, and media practices. And for this reason, this research is positioned by the idea that automotive advertisements—diverse as they often are—reflect a particular type of language, or

signifying practice, that is readily understood, accessible, and associated in our actions (i.e. buying habits) within contemporary American society.

SER Assumptions about Language and Ideology

SER is informed by the belief that language and ideology are always entwined; this theoretical position views language as a vehicle for promulgating ideological beliefs. Berlin writes:

> Language constitutes arenas in which ideological battles are continually fought. The different language practices of different social groups are inscribed with ideological prescriptions, interpretations of experience that reinforce conceptions of what really exists, what is really good, and what is politically possible. The discourse of any given group tacitly instructs its members in who they are and how they fit into this larger scheme, as well as in the nature of the scheme itself. (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 92-93)

What Berlin highlights here is the idea that different language practices facilitate ideological beliefs about lived experiences, and what is believed to be true about life and reality. These language practices give rise to beliefs about what is normal, which in turn inculcates members into a "scheme" of what is normal.

Because of their familiarity and acceptance, automotive advertisements reflect a type of language practice that is not only a primary site for analyzing the historically situated social, political, economic, and material conditions present within its production, but also a primary means to expose how "subject formation" is achieved through the ideological forces present and assumed by the advertisements. And when one begins to

dig into the language practice observed in the automotive advertisements under analysis, one quickly uncovers ideological beliefs about questionable standards of normalcy found in the text.

Mixed-Method Analysis: SER and Genre Studies

This research is a mixed-method analysis that takes deliberate steps moving forward. Before employing SER to analyze automotive advertisements, this research will first incorporate genre studies as a method for analyzing the unique features of automotive advertisements as a recurrent signifying practice. Genre knowledge establishes a means for analyzing how a recurrent signifying practice operates. As Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi write in *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres*, "Your knowledge of the genre provides you with a mental framework for how to read it; it gives you a set of guidelines, what reading specialist Frank Smith calls 'specifications,' for how to approach and make sense of a text" (48).

Some may wonder why one would combine genre studies with a SER analysis? Genre studies fills a methodological gap for SER in that it presents a means of establishing how a recurrent signifying practice operates, is conventionalized, and perpetuated as a social act. More than this, genre studies (and the phenomenon of "genre" as a conventionalized language practice) present clear evidence for how language is a shared construction, one that is malleable, refined, and conventionalized in various ways, by various discourse communities, in various texts and contexts—views readily aligned and shared by SER (see earlier discussion on SER assumptions about language). By isolating a widely shared language practice, such as automotive advertisements, one is able to narrow in on a signifying practice that has a broad influence on a wide-ranging

audience that is readily inundated by this genre—and the ideological forces that are openly normalized in its wake.

To summarize and preview the research that follows, automotive advertisements represent a recurrent language practice that holds social-ontological significations as discursive constructs and frameworks that position audience to accept ideologically charge beliefs that stem from outside political, economic, social, and material conditions. And by first analyzing the genre features of the advertisements, one can ground the data in a way that helps identify patterns and ideological views across the genre sample that signal broader implications to the social-ontological significations being openly consumed and accepted by a general audience. These patterns and ideological views, embodied by the discourse, will be isolated and analyzed through a SER lens.

It must be noted upfront that a SER analysis is a qualitative, interpretive, and constructive act based within the historic conditions and cultural codes of the person involved. As Berlin writes, "Thus, in composing or in interpreting a text, a person engages in an analysis of the cultural codes operating in defining his or her subject position, the positions of the audience, and the constructions of the matter to be considered" (90). As a result, the analysis that follows is one grounded by the author's view. That being said, each reader will have their own perspective on the cultural codes analyzed in the ads; these added perspectives—whether aligned or conflicted—are welcomed, and ultimately reinforce the assumptions and foundation to the heterogeneous work involved in SER.

Rhetorical Genre Studies: Analyzing Recurrent Signifying Practices

Genre scholarship is an extremely diverse and vibrant area of research—one with a rich history that includes different schools and approaches. The three most notable and distinct areas in this field include the Systemic Functional Linguistics (also commonly referred to as the Sydney School of genre analysis), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and the New Rhetoric School (Johns 195). In order to avoid confusion with the broad nature of scholarship connected with the New Rhetoric movement, which this particular school is rooted within, this third school in genre studies will be referred to here simply as the Rhetorical Genre School (RGS).

Much of the research developed by the RGS school is generally dedicated to the contextual aspects involving genres, and the social implications that such recurrent signifying practices hold. Ann Johns describes this area as "those theorists and researchers, especially in the New Rhetoric School in North America, whose principal interests revolve around *social practice—and the contexts in which social practices take place*" (199). Many of the nuances between the different schools are thoroughly explored and outlined in John Flowerdew's "Reconciling Contrasting Approaches to Genre Analysis" (*New Directions in English for Specific Purposes Research*). And in Flowerdew's work, he outlines how these contrasting approaches, whether heavily linguistic or contextual, can be joined in beneficial ways to develop stronger understandings of the rich complexities that surround recurrent signifying practices of genres in all its forms and manifestations.

Many scholars have defined genre with variant degrees of emphasis regarding text versus context, spoken versus written, professional versus colloquial. In RGS, an often-

cited definition of genre is connected to Carolyn R. Miller's 1984 article, "Genre as Social Action," in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* where she refers to genres broadly as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (159). This position is extended and refined in Donna J. Kain's 2004 article, "Constructing Genre," in *Technical Communication Quarterly*, where she writes that "Genres are routine, yet dynamic, responses to communicative situations, driven by communal discursive practices and shaped by communities' accepted conventions" (377). Both definitions point to the importance of looking at genre from the social and contextual level, but for an even fuller account of genre as a theoretical framework, Berkenkotter and Huckin's provide a 5-point definition for genre in *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication* (1995). Their definition is broken down into the following five bullet points:

- *Dynamism*. Genres are dynamic rhetorical forms that are developed from actors' responses to recurrent situations and that serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning. Genres change over time in response to their users' sociocognitive needs.
- *Situatedness*. Our knowledge of genres is derived from and embedded in our participation in the communicative activities of daily and professional life. As such, genre knowledge is a form of "situated cognition" that continues to develop as we participate in the activities of the ambient culture.
- *Form and Content*. Genre knowledge embraces both form and content, including a sense of what content is appropriate to a particular purpose in a particular situation at a particular point in time.

- *Duality of Structure*. As we draw on genre rules to engage in professional activities, we *constitute* social structures (in professional, institutional, and organizational contexts) and simultaneously *reproduce* these structures.
- *Community Ownership*. Genre conventions signal a discourse community's norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology. (5)

Berkenkotter and Huckin's definition of genre establishes an extensive theoretical framework for understanding the variant avenues of research possibilities when exploring genre studies. Their 5-point definition is the baseline for the way this research positions itself towards genre studies.

Due to the limited space provided here, much of the nuances discussed by Berkenkotter and Huckin on the definition of genre, is condensed to the bullet points provided here. That said, the first 3 points reflect much of the assumptions of SER and RGS as discussed earlier. The notion of "dynamism" and "situatedness" look at recurrent signifying practices and situations as historically and socially situated (and changing over time), with the notion of "form and content" based on unique language practices of differing discourse communities. But the last two bullet points are important to emphasize and elaborate on before narrowing in on automotive advertisements as a specific type of genre that holds social, material, and ontological implications.

Duality of Structure and Community Ownership

Berkenkotter and Huckin's point on the "duality of structure" is inspired by sociologist Anthony Gidden's theory of structuration, as seen in *The Constitution of Society* (1984). Gidden's work exposes how previous theories of social structures often limit and suppress the notion of human agency, positing that human actions are implicated by the

stimuli provided by social structures. Gidden revises this view with a "duality of structure," where he writes, "Structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution" (5). In other words, even though social structures may influence social practices by human agents, human agents still retain agency by simultaneously influencing how those social structures are instituted and perpetuated. This then is the duality of structure.

Building on this theory of sociology, Berkenkotter and Huckins demonstrate how genre, and recurrent signifying practices, operate as a practical means by which this phenomenon is enacted in various social structures, whether in "professional, institutional, and organizational contexts" (ibid). Put another way, recurrent signifying practices within professional, institutional, and organizational contexts influence the social structures, just as much as the social structures of professional, institutional, and organizational contexts influence the way recurrent signifying practices are produced. Each is reinforced by the other in a kind of cycle of reification. But it is important to highlight Gidden's notion that human agents are not wholly and completely influenced by these social structures as passive beings, but rather they are beings that still retain agency in how these social structures are constructed and perpetuated.

Berkenkotter and Huckin's final point on "community ownership" is a broad one, but one that aligns directly with the current research presented here. As they write, "Genre conventions signal a discourse community's norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology" (ibid). This point is an extension to the "duality of structure." But more than simply reinforcing the social structures represented by any given genre, the recurrent

signifying practices, instantiated in genres, reflect communal acquiescence to norms and standards that coalesces into communal acceptance to particular types of truths, values, beliefs, and ways of being in the world. One might call this by-product of genre as "group-think," where the recurrent signifying practices by a discourse community fuse with broader social, political, ideological, epistemological, and socially ontological ways of thinking, which is latently imbued into the discourse.

Inadvertently, Berkenkotter and Huckin overlook how theories of SER provide extended support for understanding how this occurs. As Berlin's theories of SER demonstrate, the political, religious, economic, social and material conditions present at any given moment in time, are forces that influence language practices. And as discourse communities establish their own signifying practices, these forces are manifested, reified, and perpetuated to the point that they begin to normalize certain ways of thinking. This then is the "community ownership" that Berkenkotter and Huckin describe.

The purpose in emphasizing these two points in Berkenkotter and Huckin's definition of genre is to illustrate how their work helps provide a theoretical background to understanding the impact that recurrent signifying practices can have in reinforcing social structures and influencing social thought—or "subject formation," as Berlin would put it. One clear example of this can be seen in automotive advertisements. But first, one must understand the conventions of the genre of automotive advertisements—to be able to parse its parts—before a fuller analysis can be conducted using SER and RGS in exploring all the ways this recurrent signifying practice influences social structures and social ontology within the context of contemporary American society. There is a lot of research on promotional advertisements[1], but for the purposes here, I turn to Vijay K.

Bhatia's work, "Generic Patterns in Promotional Discourse," found in *Persuasion Across Genres* (2005).

Genre Conventions for Print Advertisements

Bhatia's work on promotional discourse (2005) establishes a clear foundation for understanding the various patterns and conventions associated with different forms of promotional genres, including book reviews, sales letters, job applications, and more. One specific form of promotional material analyzed for its generic conventions includes print advertisements. And it is this piece of Bhatia's work that presents direct applicability to the current research project pursued here in regards to printed automotive advertisements. Bhatia writes, "most print advertisements of hard sell type make use of some of the following rhetorical moves to persuade potential customers to buy the product or service they promote" (214). Bhatia describes these moves as the "Generic structure of advertisements;" these 10 rhetorical moves are listed as follows (214):

1. Headlines
2. Targeting the market
3. Justifying the product or service *by establishing a niche*
4. Detailing the product or service
5. Establishing credentials
6. Endorsement or Testimonials
7. Offering incentives
8. Using pressure tactics
9. Soliciting response
10. Signature line and Logo etc.

These ten moves establish a clear framework for analyzing print advertisements. It should be noted that these ten rhetorical moves present a range of possibilities found in printed advertisements. As Bhatia writes:

> It must be pointed out that advertising copywriters often select from a range of rhetorical moves from the above. It is very rare to find all the moves in the same advertisement and in the same order. These moves are often creatively exploited by good copywriters to achieve an effect most suitable for a particular product or service keeping in mind the audience they target. (215)

As a result, this framework is more like a key to a map, highlighting common symbols as conventions, but still requiring the reader to glean where and how the parts are found and adapted within the text.

Moving forward, this framework will be used as the method for identifying and analyzing the operative parts when looking at print automotive advertisements. As mentioned early, quoted from Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi, "Your knowledge of the genre provides you with a mental framework for how to read it . . . for how to approach and make sense of a text" (ibid). Bhatia's ten rhetorical moves provides this type of mental scaffolding for seeing how the genre of printed advertisements operates as a recurrent signifying practice/text. And by readily seeing and understanding the genre features and conventions of a text—both in its parts and its whole—further questions can be extended to explore additional ways the content of the genre might hold influence and sway with an audience. These additional questions align with the research discussed early, exploring how SER provides a means for identifying and analyzing outside social conditions

embedded into discourse, and how Berkenkotter and Huckin's "duality of structure," and "community ownership," lend further theoretical support for understanding how recurrent signifying practices can have broader social, material, and ontological implications. It is now time to look at a few example advertisements, and dig a little deeper.

A Look at Four Advertisements

The following four automotive advertisements were randomly selected from two contemporary magazines (*Esquire* and *GQ*), magazines that were randomly selected off the shelves of a local bookstore. The four advertisements are listed in the endnotes of this chapter. All of the advertisements under analysis have three common features outlined by Bhatia (2005) in his 10 rhetorical moves in the "generic structure of advertisements;" these features include (ibid):

- Headlines
- Detailing the product or service
- Signature line and Logo etc.

Because the focus of this research is not on corporate logos or branding, the third feature of Bhatia's framework on "signature line and logo" will not be a focus presented here. The other two rhetorical moves common to all four advertisements (*headline* and *detailing product or service*) will be analyzed; each move is transcribed for the reader in the endnotes. These two common rhetorical moves provide a baseline for looking across the genre sample, while also allowing the targeted application of SER to identify outside social, material, and ontological influences playing into the discursive signifying practice of the text. Before applying theories of SER, each advertisement will be briefly summarized, with added focus on the headline and detailing of the product.

The first advertisement is a Volkswagen's Touareg[2]. The car is prominently centered in the advertisement with a still image that captures the vehicle in motion—wheels slightly blurred to display the vehicle moving forward. The car is driving on an unmarked paved road. The background is full of trees, with plush green moss growing along the road. No human, or human-made construct (like a home or building) is present; even the driver is not visible. The picture is a stark contrast between the vehicle and the natural setting of the forest. Below the image is a block of text where two rhetorical moves are made that illustrates Bhatia's framework: a *headline*, and *detailing the product*. The headline reads, "Loves fresh air. And Bel Air." The text that includes the detailing of the product describes aspects of the engine, miles per gallon, interior features that include dimensions over the sunroof and cargo space (*Esquire* 65). One of the final ideas expressed by the text includes the belief that "The new Touareg is ready for real life and the finer things in life in equal measure" (ibid).

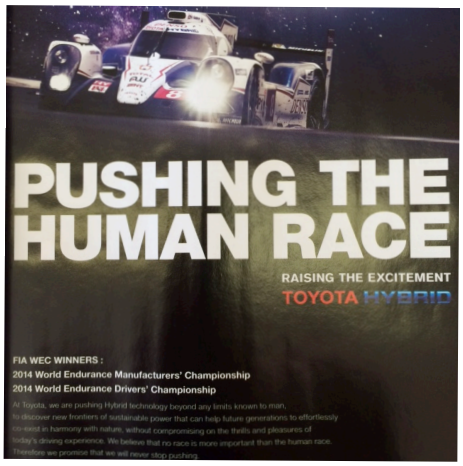
The second advertisement is the Lincoln MKC[3]. This car ad is a two-page spread (*Esquire* 74-75) that includes two headlines and a brief detailing of product. The majority of the ad is centered on the vehicle in the first page, with an open road on the second page—with trees and mountains in the background. The sky is even dotted with what appear to be a flock of birds, contrasted by the white clouds out in the distance. The first headline is a

single word that is hovering above the vehicle, written in all caps with alternating font size to create the appearance of two words in one (FREE and FRENETIC: "FRENETIC"). The second headline is written in two sentences: "THE FIRST-EVER LINCOLN MKC. LIVE IN YOUR MOMENT" (ibid). It appears that to "live in your moment," while driving the MKC, is to be both "free" and "frenetic." In the detailing of the product, the ad writes, "Feel free to take on whatever chaos comes your way, with the turbocharged EcoBoost® engine and active noise control technology in the 2015 MKC" (ibid). In other words, the car becomes a means of finding peace and balance in a loud, chaotic world.

The third advertisement is the Mercedes-Benz S 63AMG Coupé[4]. This car ad is a two-page spread (*GQ* 118-19), with a headline and a brief detailing of product. It should be noted that the two-page spread is dominated by a side view of the car in motion, alongside the coast. Dark rain clouds fill the backdrop of the picture. The vehicle appears to be racing forward by the sight of water being sprayed up alongside the car. The headline reads, "A powerful impression" (118). The detailing of the product is a simple description, "The new S 63AMG Coupé" (ibid). The reader is left to ponder the "powerful impression" between the vehicle and dark setting created by a coastal rainstorm.

The fourth advertisement is one that is selling a type of car as opposed to a single vehicle. This is the Toyota Hybrid[5]. This advertisement has two headlines. The first is written in bold lettering, and is the centerpiece to the ad: "PUSHING THE HUMAN

RACE" (GQ 51). The second headline is just below the first, and states: "RAISING THE EXCITEMENT" (ibid). Above both headlines is a professional racecar—one designed for the racetracks (and not sold commercially). This ad is different than the other three under analysis. It is stark with a black backdrop, centering on the words of the text as opposed to spotlighting a particular vehicle. The racecar above seems to echo the second headline, "RAISING THE EXCITEMENT" (ibid). The rhetorical move of "detailing the product" is one that expresses more of a mission statement for Toyota as opposed to a simple description of a product. Toyota writes,



> At Toyota, we are pushing Hybrid technology beyond any limits known to man, to discover new frontiers of sustainable power that can help future generations to effortlessly co-exist in harmony with nature, without compromising on the thrills and pleasures of today's driving experience. We believe that no race is more important than the human race. Therefore we promise that we will never stop pushing. (*GQ* 51)

Here we see a very different car advertisement, one that seems to expose contemporary concerns for broader social issues when buying a car today. The racecar in the ad, in conjunction with the text, essentially becomes a metaphor for the human race.

This ad is perhaps the clearest instance of how social, material, and political influences can manifest in the discursive signifying practice of this recurrent genre. But whereas this ad is perhaps more direct in its appeal, the other three ads employ subtext

and subtle appeals that reflect similar social, material, political, and economic influences. To further identify and analyze these outside forces manifesting in the texts, it is now time to apply theories of SER.

SER: Identifying Outside Conditions of Influence and Ideology

In the first advertisement (Volkswagen[3]), there are many points worth highlighting in terms of outside social, political, economic, and material influence playing into the discourse. The first prominent point is seen in the headline of the ad, "Loves fresh air. And Bel Air" (*Esquire* 65). For many in American culture, the reference to Bel Air calls to mind an affluent community in Los Angeles, near Beverly Hills. It is a community where the median home price is between 1.5 and 2.5 million dollars (Trulia). By incorporating identification with this community in the ad, Volkswagen is positioning the audience to believe that owning this vehicle is, in part, to be joined and representative of this exclusive home-owning community.

Other subtle influences of the ad can be seen in the reference to "Clean Diesel," found in the detailing of the product. This language is emblematic of the political debate over "clean energy." By signifying "Clean Diesel," Volkswagen is able to ascribe the belief to the viewer that diesel-grade petroleum engines are environmentally sound, and "clean." It is a position that not only reinforces the petroleum industry, but also tugs on viewers desires to be environmentally conscious with their purchasing habits. And at the end of the ad, when Volkswagen writes that the "new Touareg is ready for real life and the finer things in life in equal measure" (ibid), the reader is presented with a distinction between "real life," and the wealth and privilege that comes with the "finer things in life." In the context of the ad, "real life" is the "fresh air" found in the mountain

scenery—a place that many might encounter while on vacation (a privilege that not everyone can afford to enjoy). And if this is the real life, than the "finer things in life" must be what awaits the reader back in "Bel Air," a joyful thought for many who are not economically able to afford such a life. In this one ad, one discovers how political, economic, and social forces merge to position the viewer and the product in a way that normalizes, what is otherwise, a privileged status in America—one afforded to few.

The second advertisement (Lincoln[4]) is a little more subtle than the first. The discourse of the text appears transparent in its appeals, but there are outside conditions that are ideologically present, which influence how the text operates and is interpreted. The first headline ("FRENETIC"), with the different font size creating the display of two words (Free and Frenetic), captures an economic reality that few individuals experience—namely, the condition of having the leisurely freedom to travel in what appears to be the countryside (with mountains in the distance, and no signs of civilization around). The second headline reinforces this economic and personal self-sufficiency, with the idea, "LIVE IN YOUR MOMENT" (*Esquire* 74). Anyone that can afford this car is subjected to see their own self as "free" to "live in their own moment"—whatever that might entail.

In the section that details the product, Lincoln continues this theme for self-determination and sufficiency with the description, "Feel free to take on whatever chaos comes your way, with the turbocharged EcoBoost® engine and active noise control technology in the 2015 MKC" (ibid). As described earlier, the car becomes a means of finding peace and balance in a loud, chaotic world. And by purchasing this vehicle, with the "EcoBoost® engine," one is not only able to attain freedom against an unstable world,

but also able to feel good about purchasing an "eco" friendly vehicle—a socially, and politically relevant ideological position present today.

The third advertisement (Mercedes-Benz[5]) appears simple in its limited use of discourse. There is only one headline, "A powerful impression" (*GQ* 118), and a simple description of the product, "The new S 63AMG Coupé" (ibid). For many in American culture, Mercedes-Benz is a car brand associated with wealth and power. The simple headline and detailing of product appears to reinforce this cultural code—giving very little information and relying upon the reader to want to buy this vehicle on looks and name brand alone. To own this vehicle is to make "[a] powerful impression" (ibid).

The fourth advertisement (Toyota Hybrid[6]) is a clear example of how social ideology can manifest and influence discourse. The very idea of "pushing the human race" is one based in the social belief that humanity's purpose is grounded in advancing technology. And Toyota is positioning itself as helping facilitate this advancement through hybrid technology. As mentioned earlier, the racecar in the ad essentially becomes a metaphor for the human race. This position is reinforced in the detailing of the product, when Toyota writes, "we are pushing Hybrid technology beyond any limits known to man" (*GQ* 51). In conjunction with this pursuit, Toyota aligns itself with the political proponents for sustainable living and environmental stewardship, while also supporting car enthusiasts who enjoy fast speeds, and the excitement of vehicle racing. This text illustrates the divide that exists in society between desires for environmental protection and sustainable energy, with the equal desires for increased technology that adds "excitement" to modern life.

Each of the texts under analysis provides a glimpse into some of the cultural codes present and operating in today's automotive advertisements. But beyond these cultural codes and ideological nuances of each ad, there is a broader social and ontological implication to this particular recurrent signifying practice that needs further explication, one that exposes a conflict in motive in how humanity defines itself moving forward.

A Social-Ontological Conflict of Motives

As discussed earlier, recurrent signifying practices (i.e. genres) create a "duality of structure" by the reciprocal relationship between production of text and reification of social structures; they also create "community ownership" in the way they normalize beliefs that includes "epistemology, ideology, and social ontology" (Berkenkotter and Huckins 5). Berlin's theory of SER exposes how these ideological forces play into our discursive practices, providing a lens into the historic conditions of language practices as a kind of artifact that embodies these outside forces and conditions. And as Berlin further explains, these language practices influence subject formation, with the subject being the center point for a variety of different discursive and ideological forces:

> From this perspective, the subject is the point of intersection and influence of various conflicted discourses—discourses about class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, and the life. Of equal importance, the subject in turn acts upon these discourses. The individual is the location of a variety of significations, but is also an agent of change, not simply an unwitting product of external discursive and material forces.

> The subject negotiates and resists codes rather than simply accommodating them. (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 85)

In this way, automotive advertisements represent one way that a recurrent signifying practice holds influence in contemporary society. These types of ads represent a single example within a larger barrage of discourses that bombard the average citizen in contemporary society. But as a recurrent signifying practice, one that the average person has become accustomed to recognizing, they represent an accepted form of discourse and language practice. And when a type of discourse and language practice becomes accepted, a participant within the discourse community becomes susceptible to accepting the ideological beliefs inlayed within the text. As Berlin writes, "The different language practices of different social groups are inscribed with ideological prescriptions, interpretations of experiences that reinforce conceptions of what really exists, what is really good, and what is really politically possible" (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 93). As a result, automotive advertisements hold influence in swaying the general public to see and believe ideas about life, reality, and what is considered normal. And this influence has social-ontological implications—one that, beyond the political and economic ideological influence, a more problematic social and material influence is inlayed in the audience.

Many of the implications have already been discussed in the previous sections, but there is a larger issue to these advertisements that can be found across the genre sample—one that has broad social-ontological implications. After looking across the genre sample, there is a clear influence present in all four advertisements, both a privileging of the environment through visual displays of pristine settings such as the

woods, open grassland, and coastline, and the privileging of the vehicle in the ad—and all the technological advancements made in association to the vehicle. This dual positioning is found even in the Toyota ad through the texts explicit claiming of aligning to help "discover new frontiers of sustainable power" so as to "co-exist in harmony with nature," while at the same time not "compromising on the thrills and pleasures of today's driving experience" (*GQ* 51). What is ironic about this dual positioning is the way it negates the near antithetical relationship between our desires for maintaining natural environments and our desires for the increasing development of more vehicles, which necessitates more roads and freeways, which require the development of more land and resources for our increasing *drive* for technology. Both desires are not mutually compatible, and yet these automotive advertisements normalize a reality in which they are—creating a social-ontological conflict of motives with viewers.

Conclusion

Moving forward, these types of ideological forces need to be brought to the public's attention—if only to allow for open and honest debate about our continued purchasing habits, and the discursive practices associated with said habits. As Berlin envisioned through increased awareness of SER, "[t]he subject negotiates and resists codes rather than simply accommodating them" (ibid). This analysis has been conducted in aim of this goal, bringing to the forefront the social and ontological implications connected with the signifying practices in automotive advertisements.

Notes

[1]The study of advertisements in relation to public discourse is a well-established area of research in genre studies (Bhatia, 2005; Fairclough, 1993; Kathpalia, 1992; Featherstone, 1991), as well as professional/technical communication (Dalhen, 2004; Sciulli, 2006; Kalro, 2010). Bhatia writes, "Advertising is one of [the most] dynamic and versatile genres of public discourse today, in that it can boast of some of the most varied and innovative uses of lexio-grammatical and discoursal forms and rhetorical strategies" (214). This versatility and dynamism has provided researchers a rich source of data for looking at consumer culture (Featherstone), genre-mixing (Bhatia 1995), rhetorical moves and generic features (Bhatia, 2005), categorical analysis (Kathpalia), content analysis of comparative strategies (Kalro), and strategies of profit vs. social causes (Sciulli).

[2]Volkswagen, Touareg. The *headline* for the advertisement is: "**Loves fresh air. And Bel Air."** (*Esquire* 65). The *detailing of the product* is:

> **Introducing the new Volkswagen Touareg TDI® Clean Diesel.** This turbocharged engine gets up to 765 highway miles on a single tank* which should give you plenty of time to enjoy its sophisticated, refined interior and the view from the available 12.7-sq-ft panoramic sunroof. Take it out, get its wheels dirty, use the available hands-free Easy Open liftgate, drop the rear seats and fill its 64 cubic feet of cargo space. The new Touareg is ready for real life and the finer things in life in equal measure. **Isn't it time for German engineering?** (*Esquire* 65)

[3]Lincoln, MKC. There are two headlines in this advertisement. The first is in the picture, above the vehicle, with alternating font size to portray two words simultaneously (FREE and FRENETIC): "FRENETIC" (*Esquire* 74). The second headline is the in text below the picture; this headline reads, "**THE FIRST-EVER LINCOLN MKC.** LIVE IN YOUR MOMENT" (ibid). The detailing of the product is: "Feel free to take on whatever chaos comes your way, with the turbocharged EcoBoost® engine and active noise control technology in the 2015 MKC." (ibid).

[4]Mercedes-Benz, S 63AMG Coupé. The headline for the advertisement is: "A powerful impression." (*GQ* 118). The detailing of the product is simply, "The new S 63AMG Coupé." (ibid).

[5]Toyota Hybrid. This advertisement, instead of highlighting one particular car, is instead advertising a particular type of car offered by the manufacturer—a hybrid. There are two headlines in this ad. The first is: "PUSHIN THE HUMAN RACE"; the second is listed below, with "RAISING THE EXCITEMENT" (*GQ* 51). The *detailing of the product*:

> At Toyota, we are pushing Hybrid technology beyond any limits known to man, to discover new frontiers of sustainable power that can help future generations to effortlessly co-exist in harmony with nature, without compromising on the thrills and pleasures of today's driving experience. We believe that no race is more important than the human race. Therefore we promise that we will never stop pushing. (ibid)

CHAPTER IV

COMPOSING PLACE: A NEW PEDAGOGY

> The work of English studies is to reassess the place of discourse in shaping knowledge and consciousness, doing so within the contemporary context of theory in language, literature, and rhetoric. . . . [I]t remains the central task of teachers to rethink theory through classroom practice and classroom practice through theory. The result will be methods of locating and naming the discursive acts that encourage unjust class, race, gender, and other power relations through the tacit endorsement of certain economic, social, and political arrangements.
>
> —James Berlin, *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 121

Introduction

In James Berlin's final work, *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* (RPC), he outlines how theories of Social-Epistemic Rhetoric (SER) can inform English studies—and more specifically, composition theory and pedagogy. Much of Berlin's aim is to show how theories of SER can be used as a tool in English studies to expose (for students) discursive practices that reinforce political, economic, and social inequalities that exist and are perpetuated in the production, distribution, and reception of texts. In this way, students become "active agents of social and political change," and acquire a form of

critical literacy that aligns with educating a populace that "more justly [serves] the interests of a democratic society" (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 122).

In the epigraph above, Berlin stresses how theory and classroom practice are inherently related, going so far as to say that it is a "central task" for teachers to be able to extend and utilize one by means of the other so as to refine both. Much of Berlin's own pedagogical approach, as outlined in his two proposed courses in *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures*, are directly informed by—and the result of—the theories and ideologies previously discussed in the work (i.e. postmodernism, Marxism, feminism, and more). These theories place an important emphasis on exploring how discursive acts endorse and serve "certain economic, social, and political arrangements" (ibid).

But it is not just theory and classroom practice that develops and informs pedagogy—it is also the assumptions and worldviews the teacher brings with them into the classroom. For Berlin, his beliefs that the world is constructed through discourse as symbolic action "in shaping knowledge and consciousness" (ibid), informs his political passions to mold a more democratic populace through education, using critical theories as a guiding method for classroom practice (and vice versa). As Berlin writes, "To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality" ("Contemporary Composition" 766), and for Berlin, a more just and democratic society appears to be the ultimate aim and philosophy that structures his pedagogical practice.

Much of Berlin's work focuses on the political implications that surround discursive acts. At the end of his proposed course work, Berlin writes, "Of course, in this formulation, the classroom becomes a site of political activity and struggle, key features of democratic education in a free society" (RPC 122). Much of SER is steeped with this

aim, exposing how political, economic, and ideological forces influence discursive practices (which in turn influence and reify hegemonic structures). But Berlin also describes aspects of SER that includes the social and material conditions, and how these forces also influence "discourse in shaping knowledge and consciousness" (RPC 121). More specifically Berlin writes, "the subject that experiences and the material and social conditions experienced are discursively constituted in historically specific terms" (RPC 89). In many ways, this is an essential premise to SER, highlighting how any subject and any text is historically situated by the social and material conditions of itself. It is this assumption and premise to SER that provides a grounded approach to being able to further analyze the political, economic, and ideological practices evident by any one person and any one text at any one point in time. The social and material conditions—though often considered merely context—are essential elements in what provides the frame of reference to SER incisive critique and analysis of discursive acts.

Though current research and pedagogical practice for political and ideological aims is rich and extensive (with more work to be done), this chapter takes a step back from the political/ideological and explores Berlin's stance on how the social and material conditions operate in the production, distribution, and reception of texts—and how this influence might present new methods for teaching composition in the classroom. Starting from this position, this research asks: How might the social and material conditions that surround and influence "discourse in shaping knowledge and consciousness" (ibid) become critical aspects to explore in the composing process?

Just as Berlin uses critical theory to discern "methods of locating and naming the discursive acts that encourage unjust class, race, gender and [more]" (RPC 121), this

chapter is informed by theories of place[1] to discern methods of locating and naming the myriad ways the social and material conditions hold influence in "shaping knowledge and consciousness" for students. And by exposing students to this influence as they develop their abilities to write, these students will be exposed to Berlin's idea that "To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality" (ibid). This approach offers a different kind of critical bent than the one Berlin brings to the classroom (whether regarding political, economic, or other); though different, it is one that I believe is nonetheless empowering, constructive, and introspective for a composition classroom.

Moving forward, this chapter pursues the "central task" Berlin espouses by exploring the theoretical implications of the social and material conditions of place—whether in literature, life, and rhetoric—so as to "reassess the place of discourse in shaping knowledge and consciousness" in connection with the classroom practice of teaching composition (ibid). The aim is to outline a pedagogy informed by place. But doing so is a tricky thing to articulate and outline in just one chapter, especially when considering the entire scope of how pedagogy operates. As Nancy Myers defines in her article, "The Slave of Pedagogy":

> Pedagogy suggests to me an ethical philosophy of teaching that accounts for the complex matrix of people, knowledge, and practice within the immediacy of each class period, each assignment, each conference, each grade. For me that is pedagogy—the *art* of teaching—the regular, connected, and articulated choices made from within a realm of possibilities and then acted on. Historically, it accounts for the goals of the institution and to some extent society; it manifests the goals of the

> individual teacher, which may include an agenda to help students learn to critique both the institution and society; and it makes room for the goals of the individual students. (166)

To provide a full range of how a particular type of pedagogy operates is beyond the means capable here, but I believe a basic approach and outline can be articulated when describing a pedagogy informed by place. To achieve this, six different themes are identified and adapted for consideration:

1. Place in Literature and Imagination
2. Place in Mythology and Belief
3. Social/Cultural Practices within Place
4. Objects of Place
5. Sacred Places and Memorial Spaces
6. A Place in Time

These themes illustrate how place, and the social and material conditions connected with place, play into discursive practices, which in turn, can be adapted for classroom practices.

Before leading into each particular theme, this chapter reviews studies in composition and rhetoric to identify how these themes emerged as aspects of discursive inquiry connected with place. As Berlin well establishes, the social and material conditions are always present: "we cannot escape discursive regimes, the power-knowledge formations of our historical position. . . . But if the subject is a construct of signifying practices, so are the material conditions to which the subject responds" (88 RPC). In other words, the social and material conditions are always present in relation to

our signifying practices—both being mutually constructed and historically situated. And likewise, they are always present in composition studies, practices, and theories—there between the lines, in how the research, practice, and theory shapes knowledge and the subject position of our students, which in turn shapes how they see the world. The key is drawing out the correlation, and being able to refine the theory and scholarship into purposeful classroom practices that challenges our students. The six identified themes attempt to illustrate how this can be achieved so as to provide a theoretically informed frame of reference for each classroom practice. In doing so, new avenues for classroom practices are exposed, which are adapted into "gateway activities" as George Hillocks[2] describes in *Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice*. Hillocks writes, "Theories of discourse, inquiry, learning, and teaching are useless if we cannot invent the activities that will engage our students in using, and therefore learning, the strategies essential to certain writing tasks" (149). This then is the final goal, developing writing activities connected with each new area discussed.

By exposing students to the different ways their language practices are tied to the social and material conditions of their lived reality, and how that "reality" is constructed and shaped through discursive acts and language practices, students are exposed to new forms of inquiry when exploring and developing strategies for composition. This type of pedagogy is anchored by the writing tasks incorporated in the gateway activities. These gateway activities are intended as writing tasks (or strategies) that lend themselves to greater awareness, social-consciousness, and personal agency for students in a first-semester composition course. As a result, students are exposed to new avenues for

discovery, observation, invention, and introspection when writing in connection with the social material conditions of their lived experience and reality.

Influence of Place in Composition and Rhetoric Studies

This literature review is intended as a brief overview to the varied ways that the social and material conditions have directly, or indirectly, influenced studies in composition and rhetoric. The goal in doing so is to provide background to the ideas and assumptions that ultimately lead to the six themes that frame the classroom practices and gateway activities. This review is not exhaustive, but rather an initial overview that reflects Berlin's idea to "rethink theory through classroom practice and classroom practice through theory" (RPC 121). These ideas are expanded upon and discussed more in each section, leading into the gateway activities.

The first theme involves the use of literature. The debate over whether to use literature in a composition class or not, is one that has been around for many decades, and one too extensive to elaborate fully here. My position on the subject aligns with Gary Tate in "A Place for Literature in Freshman Composition," where he writes at the end, "What I am suggesting here is simply that it is time for us to adopt a far more generous vision of our discipline and its scope, a vision that excludes *no* texts" (321). From Tate's position, no text is off limit if it can be adapted to engage thoughtful/purposeful writing. And I believe certain literary texts can be useful for reflection, introspection, and discursive investigation—especially when considered in relation to the social and material conditions of a student's life experience, and the language practices connected with that personal life experience. An example of this can be seen in Nancy Sommers's

"Between the Drafts," where she discovers something new about herself and her authorial voice through the memories of her childhood, and the German stories told to her:

> As a child, I hated these horrid stories with their clear moral lessons, exhorting me to listen to my parents: do the right thing, they said; obey authority, or else catastrophic things—dissipation, suffocation, loss of thumbs—will follow. It never occurred to me as a child to wonder why my parents, who had escaped Nazi Germany in 1939, were so deferential to authority, so beholden to sanctioned sources of power. I guess it never occurred to them to reflect or to make any connections between generations of German children reading *Struvelpater*, being instructed from early childhood to honor and defer to the parental authority of the state, and the Nazis' easy rise to power. (23)

Though anecdotal, Sommers's reflection upon her childhood memories, the stories told to her, and the social/historical context in which these German children stories were told, provide a rich source for discursive inquiry—both within and outside of the stories told. And it is along these lines that certain gateway activities might be adapted for a composition course.

The second theme involves the implications between place and belief (or belief systems)—whether mythological or religious. The relationship here extends to not only the social and cultural beliefs of a particular region, but also how one might address such varied belief systems in a composition classroom. For this, Shannon Carter's article, "Living inside the Bible (Belt)," presents a significant point of reflection for composition studies—one that aligns with the current work presented here[3]. She writes of her

pedagogical philosophy: "A key objective of my writing courses may be critical consciousness: awareness of one's subject position and the partial and socially situated nature of one's understanding of the world" (572). In other words, Carter maintains a stance of developing awareness with students—what she calls "critical consciousness"—so as to help them question the social constructs and situated beliefs that play into their own subject position. In order to achieve this goal while living in the "Bible Belt" (with a predominate population of Evangelical Christian students), Carter develops classroom practices that embrace religious thinking in constructive ways. And like Berlin's pedagogical approach of bringing politics, class, gender, and ideology to the forefront of a writing class, Carter presents strategies for bringing religious thinking to the forefront of her writing course—helping her students develop "rhetorical dexterity" (574) and a form of critical literacy that is sensitive to different people and different contexts (578). Carter writes, "In this process of development, we treat literacy not as an abstract set of rigid standards but rather as a blend of mutable social forces deeply situated in time and place" (579). The gateway activities presented in this chapter are emergent and inventive extensions to the work presented by Carter, especially in the way beliefs are brought to the forefront of discussion and used for discursive inquiry.

The third theme looks at the social and cultural implications connected with place, and how these influences present new methods in teaching composition. This approach is not completely new; it can be traced to the "contact zone" articulated by Mary Louise Pratt (among other scholars advancing multi-/cultural studies[4]). As she writes, this term/idea "refer[s] to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism,

slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (34). Much of this position has been vigorously extended, challenged, and adapted for composition studies (see Bizzell, "'Contact Zones' and English Studies"; Miller, "Fault Lines in the Contact Zone"; and Swyt, "Teacher Training in the Contact Zone"). Much of this chapter's position aligns with Bizzell when she writes, "A 'contact zone' is defined primarily in terms of historical circumstances. It is circumscribed in time and space, but with elastic boundaries" (166). In other words, the conditions of our experience are historically circumscribed, and are rich with differences in terms of culture, social norms, practices, and beliefs. These differences offer a critical space for discursive inquiry, and increased understanding regarding alternative worldviews and language practices.

The fourth theme is entitled, "Objects of Place," and refers to a couple areas in composition and rhetoric studies. The idea of turning to objects for discursive inquiry seems absurd at first, but doing so opens up important instructive avenues for composing. This approach aligns, in part, with the work Geoffrey Sirc sets out in *English Composition as a Happening*, a work that traces multiple connections with the "Happenings" movement in art (during the 1950s and 1960s) and composition pedagogy. One artist involved with the Happenings (Ken Dewey), describes and summarizes the movement: "It should have been made clear that Happenings came about when painters and sculptors crossed into theatre taking with them their way of looking and doing things" (qtd. in Sirc 12). In other words, artists began to explore the physical space, place, materials, and experience of the viewer, drawing connections to experimental modes of producing and experiencing art, whether in its production (i.e. Jackson Pollock and Marcel Duchamp) or reception (i.e. Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage). This embrace

of experimentation, with the social and material conditions around us, is a central aspect to Sirc's larger goal in drawing connections between this movement and the possibilities it presents in composition pedagogy. Sirc writes:

> I offer, then these backward glances, in fervent hope: to capture the Happenings spirit for our own Composition, shaking off more than a decade of conservative professionalism; to fracture our field's genres open for possibilities, risks, and material exploration, leading to a Composition in which faith and naiveté replace knowingness and expertise; . . . re-opening Composition as a site where radical explorations are appreciated . . . (32)

By drawing connections with the material conditions of our students' surrounding environment, and developing classroom practices that incorporate discursive inquiry into these social and material conditions, students are exposed to ways that our signifying practices are connected with the world around us[5]. This type of theoretical view runs parallel with contemporary studies in Object Oriented Ontology (OOO). But it is important to note that OOO goes beyond the simple implication that our signifying practices are connected with the material conditions, and pushes that understanding to explore the ontological and epistemological implications. Both areas contribute to the classroom practices and activities presented here.

The fifth theme is entitled, "Sacred Places and Memorial Spaces," and refers to the way in which specific locations—such as museums, graveyards, and memorials—are physically and symbolically constructed. These types of locations become a direct means of analyzing and discursively inquiring into how our signifying practices are materially

and socially enacted, whether consciously or unconsciously, in a place. Often, these types of constructions are never completely free from influence, bias, or privilege. One way of thinking about this is through Michel Foucault's chapter, "Panopticism," in *Discipline and Punishment* where he describes Bentham's prison design, called the "Panopticon" (200). The description of such a prison illustrates the complex ways that physical space can be used to influence and subjugate individuals for, at times, perverse ends. Foucault writes:

> By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions – to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide – it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. (200)

This prison design is a symbolic construction of power and subjugation, and presents a means for analyzing how discipline was conceived and executed during the time of its creation. The point in referring to Foucault's work is to illustrate how exploring a constructed space, whether a museum or memorial, can provide a rich source for discursive inquiry with students—one that can evoke stirring observations and introspection in the way students understand the space they participate within.

The final theme is entitled, "A Place in Time," and explores the complex relationship between place and time, and how meaning—through discursive acts and signifying practices—are often influenced in relation to these two forces. Interestingly, the ancient Greeks had two gods connected with time including, Chronos and Kairos. As is often the case with gods being assigned or connected with physical, material, and/or experiential things (i.e. Apollo = sun; Hecate = moon; Poseidon = ocean, etc.), each god (Chronos and Kairos) was equated with a different aspect of time. The first referred to a broad notion of time, as passing chronologically. The second was in relation to a more immediate phenomenon, in what might be called a "window of opportunity" for something to happen (to use a contemporary aphorism). The sophists believed strongly in Kairos, especially in relation to rhetoric and oratory so as to seize the moment in order to secure the opinions, emotions, and judgments of your audience. George Kennedy writes of Gorgias in *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*:

> It has been claimed that the ethics, aesthetics, and rhetoric of Gorgias are all based on *kairos*. . . . Any given problem involves choice or compromise between two antitheses so that consideration of *kairos*, that is of time, place, and circumstance (e.g. Gorgias, *Palamedes* 22), alone can solve the dilemma and lead to the choice of relative truth and to action. (66-67).

Being able to explore this connection, seeing how circumstances change from moment to moment, is important lesson in composition. The classroom practice and gateway activity presented here helps students begin to make these kinds of connections, and develop conscious consideration to how time and place play into writing.

* * *

When it comes to developing new strategies for classroom activities, it is important to keep in mind the comment and question Hillocks poses: "Gateway activities open up new journeys. The problem . . . is: How does one invent them?" (149). The themes and discussion to follow represent the inventive meanderings and ideas of the author, based on a broad range of sources, and they are intended to provide a theoretically-informed frame of reference to the gateway activities offered, with the extended purpose that they might also generate new writing activities and connections with other instructors in developing a composition pedagogy informed by place.

Place in Literature and Imagination

To mention the importance of imagining place in the literary tradition would be an understatement. In many stories, the setting is often as important as the plot itself. Dante's forest leading into the circled rings of hell; Homer's epic *Iliad* along the shorelines of Troy; and Shakespeare's enchanted woods in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This importance goes well beyond the classics. One discovers the importance of setting in the magical realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's description of South America in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as well as the crushing weight and social commentary described in the India found in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The places we imagine and invent in the stories we tell hold sway and influence over the ways in which we understand, construct, and share our beliefs about morality, beauty, justice—or even the magic of love.

The importance that place holds in the literary tradition is one that also holds true beyond the page, localized by differing contexts of where a person is born, raised,

educated, traveled, trained, cultured, and so on. Every moment of our being, every step in our lives, and every thought we conceive is based in some place. Thomas Hobbes writes in *Leviathan*, "No man therefore can conceive any thing, but he must conceive it in some place" (99). This ubiquitous fact often eludes self-conscious perception, like fish blind to the sea they call home. And yet, as pervasive as this fact is, the places traveled in a lifetime often begin in the mind of a child.

When we are young, the world is only limited in so far as the imagination allows. Dragons, demons, woodland fairies, space monsters, etc., are very real entities that exist in a way that lead to night terrors, fear of the dark, or delusional attempts to fly. Children leave cookies and milk for Santa Claus. They leave a fallen tooth under the pillow for the Tooth Fairy. And they seek out plastic eggs during Easter. A whole world is invented and sustained by and for children, and often mediated by parent or guardian intent on nurturing a particular worldview—one that in the examples mentioned, clearly reflects a Western/Protestant experience.

This imagination and ability to so readily invent phantasmagoria is an appropriate beginning when looking at the relationship between discourse and place. It signals a relationship that has consequences. It highlights how the world about us is shaped, formed, and molded by our relationship to it early in life. Our place in the world is a relationship of mutual influence. Our beliefs are reinforced when presents appear under the tree, or a tooth is swapped with a dollar. When an evil dragon is slayed and the knight prevails, our morality is informed. And when Superman saves the world from outer space villains, our sense of the universe is expanded.

It is our imagination that creates a space of openness to the world, a relational space that is unencumbered by limitations, and filled with possibilities. It is through this spirit that the world is open, in which the eyes of a child look with wonder at everything around them. But as William Blake so eloquently illustrates in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, the wonder of youth is often transfigured through the trials of experience:

> How can the bird that is born for joy
> Sit in a cage and sing?
> How can a child, when fears annoy,
> But droop his tender wing,
> And forget his youthful spring! ("The Schoolboy")

Blake's poem is a cautionary note. The world can often be an unforgiving place, as one grows older. These "songs of experience" can have a profound influence in altering how one sees and understands the world, as well as their place within it. These experiences can condition a person's expectations and outlook, creating a lasting impression on how the world operates. And just as our literary tradition illustrates, or our childhood fancies demonstrate, the world we face are tenable constructs blended by our imagination and experiences. It is within this relational space that one discovers a motivational force and influence that constantly surrounds us, moves us, and goads us in ways that are often unseen.

As evident, literary fiction—and the imaginative developments that such fiction invokes—is a rich area for possible exploration when considering how discourse "shapes knowledge and consciousness," (ibid). In this way, one uncovers how literary fiction, imagination, and our lived experiences, hold possible influence in how one might view

the world, and their place within the world. This type of influence in literature is worthy of study, analysis, and exploration.

GATEWAY ACTIVITIES

A Childhood Story Remembered and Reimagined

For this assignment, students are to identify a childhood story that they remember. This could include a piece of literature, a family tale, local folklore, or a movie. The idea is for students to identify a story that was meaningful for them as a child, so as to reconsider that story today—seeing what kind of meaning it might still hold.

The story should be about something other than the student. For example: E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*; the story about how your parents first met; the lore about the ghost that roams the public library; etc. Once the story is identified, students should attempt to articulate the story as best they can today—as they remembered it as a child. After recounting the story, students should then consider and articulate why the story was meaningful for them as a child.

Questions to consider include: Who told you the story? What purpose did the story have? What meaning did you take away from it as a child? What things did you learn from the story? Did the story change how you see the world? In what way(s)? Do you still believe the story you heard as a child? If not, what has changed? What advice would you give yourself if you could go back in time?

A Place of Content and Consideration

Students are to choose a well-known story to analyze, be it *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, or *Lord of the Rings*. For this assignment, students are to examine the

story in relation to its setting be it "A Galaxy Far, Far Away," Hogwarts, or Middle Earth. The purpose of this assignment is to analyze how the setting plays a critical role in the story. To achieve a thorough analysis, students should funnel their analysis, eventually isolating two or three specific scenes within the story to analyze.

For example, if a student were to choose *Star Wars* to analyze, they might maintain a thesis that shows how space is a great equalizer in this intergalactic tale. In other words, space provides a stark contrast to the social ideals being threatened by common human foibles: greed, power, good, evil, freedom, and oppression. From this thesis, the student might narrow the analysis to study how the scene of Princess Leia being enslaved by Jabba the Hutt, or Luke's education in the swamps of Dagobah. Each scene is rich with textual details that become critical ways for developing plot, character, and motive.

By analyzing these textual details, discerning the social and material conditions of a text, students are able to see a broader context for how to observe, analyze, and understand—not only the world found within a story, but the world they encompass as well.

Place in Mythology and Belief

Our cultural and religious backgrounds can have a lasting influence on our beliefs about place. These beliefs have value in the way we approach our lives. When asked why study myths and what significance they hold, Joseph Campbell responds in *The Power of Myth*,

> People say that what we're seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an

> experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonance within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. That's what it's all finally about, and that's what these clues [in myths] help us to find within ourselves. (4-5)

Campbell makes an important point, highlighting how our beliefs—and the stories we tell—are often actively sought and reinforced so as to find connection, balance, and "resonance" with our inner self and our surrounding environment "on the purely physical plane" (ibid). These stories act as a bridge between our beliefs and our reality. They offer clues to understanding ourselves in relation to the world.

When looking at creation myths, one finds a diversity of beliefs across almost every culture and society. As one analyzes these myths of creation, one finds how these beliefs shape a person's experience with their surrounding environment.

This personal connection highlighted by Campbell aligns with Native American culture—specifically in regards to the Plains Indians (Cheyenne, Crow, and Sioux). Hyemeyohsts Storm writes in *Seven Arrows*, "Whenever we hear a Story, it is as if we were physically walking down a particular path that it has created for us. Everything we perceive upon this path or around it becomes part of our experience, both individually and collectively" (16-17). The stories connected in the Plains Indian tradition are not simply told for sharing knowledge, but are intended to shape, instruct, and facilitate reflection for a person. In this way, these stories, myths, and beliefs, hold power and influence upon a person and the collective group in which they are told.

One example of this is seen in the creation myth of the Sioux tribe. In Sioux tradition, the world is full of spirits in all material form that exist upon the earth, including plant and animal life. Ohiyesa, also known as Charles Alexander Eastman (1858-1939) of the Mdewankton Sioux, outlines a creation myth in *The Soul of the Indian*. He writes that the "First Man" was born out of a splinter in the "great toe" of the mysterious Ish-ná-e-cha-ge ("The-one-who-was-First-Created"); the First Man was considered the younger brother to the Ish-ná-e-cha-ge (124). When the world's animals rebelled against the First Man, stirred by the troublesome Spider (Unk-to-mee) who feared that man would one day rule over all of the animals, the First Man was killed by sea monsters, and his bones buried at sea (125). Ish-ná-e-cha-ge collected his bones and performed the "eneépee" ceremony, stirring life back into the First Man through steam and smoke.

For the Sioux tribe and its people, Ohiyesa highlights how this story reflects an important experience for how the world is regarded. Ohiyesa writes,

> Not only the "eneépee" itself, but everything used in connection with the mysterious event, the aromatic cedar and sage, the water, and especially the water-worn boulders, are regarded as sacred, or at the least adapted to a spiritual use. For the rock we have a special reverent name—"Tunkan," a contraction of the Sioux word for Grandfather. (81)

In this tradition, the material conditions of the earth, including cedar, sage, water, and stones, are not void of spirit, but rather are considered sacred items within their surrounding environment.

In Judeo-Christian traditions, the story of creation, as found in Genesis of the Old Testament, holds a very different perspective to the material world. It is important to mention that there are three major versions of Genesis descending from the Hebrew Masoretic, the Hebrew Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Greek Septuagint. In all three versions, Eloowwem/Elohim/God, created the Heavens and Earth, shaping Earth from a shapeless dark void, to a surface with light, water, land, plants, animals, and humans made in God's image (although in the Samaritan tradition, man is not made in God's image, but rather angels; see *The Israelite Samaritan Version of the Torah*).

It is in this section of the text that one discovers a striking difference between the material relations of humanity in the Sioux tradition (giving sacred spirituality with all things of mother Earth), versus the Judeo-Christian tradition as found in Genesis. In all three versions of Genesis an explicit belief is outlined, that humanity is given authority over all living things of earth, and divine right to suppress it in order to multiply:

Table 1. Verses in Genesis

Israelite Samaritan Text (1:28)	Masoretic Text (1:28)	Septuagint Text (1:28)
And Eloowwem blessed them. And Eloowwem said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it. And rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the living of everything that moves on the earth.	And Elohim blessed them; and Elohim said unto them: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth."	And God blessed them, saying, Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the seas and flying creatures of heaven, and all the cattle and all the earth, and all the reptiles that creep on the earth.

One could speculate that our current environmental dilemma, with global warming, is compounded by broad Judeo-Christian beliefs that are based in this creation myth,

perpetuating the idea that humanity is somehow separate from nature, and given divine authority to rule over it for the needs of humanity. But to do so here is beyond the scope of my current project. What is important to point out here is how a simple verse, idea, or story, can shape an entire belief system about the world, and humanity's relation to it.

No matter what creation myth or religious stories a person subscribes to, the beliefs and values shared can inform how a person sees the world. In a recent study published in *Cognitive Science* entitled, "Judgments About Fact and Fiction by Children From Religious and Nonreligious Backgrounds" (2014), researchers found that children (5 to 6 years old) exposed and raised with religious beliefs were more prone to believe in fantastical stories than children raised with secular beliefs. The authors write, "religious teaching, especially exposure to miracle stories, leads children to a more generic receptivity toward the impossible, that is, a more wide-ranging acceptance that the impossible can happen in defiance of ordinary causal relations" (365). This study reinforces the point that a pedagogy of place must be sensitive to the ways in which a person's beliefs can inform and influence what they think, what they know, and how they see themselves in relation to the world.

GATEWAY ACTIVITIES

Textual Analysis and Epistemic Reflections

This gateway activity is intended as a prewriting assignment. For this assignment, students are to explore the nuances between belief, claims, facts, and evidence. After going over the differences, students are to search out and find a text that reflects a complicated belief, claim, fact or evidence. This could include a slogan like Coke's, "It's the real thing," or Subway's "eat fresh." After identifying the

text, students are to unpack the beliefs that the text generates; the claims (and indirect claims) made in the text; and what (if any) kind of facts or evidence is connected with the text.

Analyzing an Origin Story

For this assignment, students are to find and analyze an origin story using primary and secondary sources. Part of the assignment is going over what a primary and secondary source is. For example, if a student was adamant about analyzing evolution as a story that accounts for the origin of humanity, that student would need to start with selections of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), and then look at secondary sources on the subject matter.

The type of belief and origin story that is chosen for the assignment is up to the student. This could include religious texts, scientific texts, mythological texts, etc. Once the topic has been chosen, and sources have been identified and analyzed, students are required to summarize the story, theory, and belief. This summary is the first part of the assignment. Next, students are to analyze the implications that this story, theory, and belief hold in relation to themselves and the world around them. In other words, how does this view influence the way they see the world (students are to provide specific concrete examples). Next, students are to identify two counter perspectives to their origin story. Students should consider these additional questions: What are these alternative perspectives, and why might people believe in them? Elaborate and explain.

Social/Cultural Practices in Place

Beyond myths, stories, and religious beliefs, the world is often dictated by local customs and practices. These differences can be quite dramatic, and illustrate how a person's worldview can be dramatically skewed by their social practices. These varied practices have been a point of discussion and intrigue for thousands of years. In Book 3 of Herodotus's *Histories*, he tells the story of the Persian king Darius:

> During his reign, Darius summoned the Hellenes at his court and asked them how much money they would accept for eating the bodies of their dead fathers. They answered that they would not do that for any amount of money. [4] Later, Darius summoned some Indians called Kallatiai, who do eat their dead parents. In the presence of the Hellenes, with an interpreter to inform them of what was said, he asked the Indians how much money they would accept to burn the bodies of their dead fathers. They responded with an outcry, ordering him to shut his mouth lest he offend the gods. Well, then, that is how people think, and so it seems to me that Pindar was right when he said in his poetry that custom is king of all. (224)

It is interesting to note that as trade and transportation increased in the ancient world, different societies were becoming increasingly aware of different social practices, as evident in Herodotus's writing. Of all the different customs that Herodotus shares, there is one that he believed was "the wisest custom," and it is about the marriage practices of Babylon. In Babylonian society, they used to hold a marriage market, where women were auctioned off to the highest bidder. The money generated during these auctions would then be "redistributed as dowries to give to the less beautiful as a kind of compensation,

so that everyone, rich and poor, beautiful and less beautiful, could thus find a mate" (xxi). This practice, and Herodotus' high esteem of this practice, is a telling sign to the values that both the Babylonian society held, as well as Herodotus' views towards women and the importance of marriage.

Different practices can be quite dramatic between different cultures and societies, whether in regards to funeral rights or marriage practices. These types of practices hold implications in understanding the social values of a society, and how that society functions in relation to the world. The ancient Greeks of Hellenes referred to this as "nomos" (custom/law), and many scholars of the time were beginning to debate and analyze the differences between a society's "nomos" and the natural environment, or physical world termed, "physis." This ancient idea of analyzing place through understanding local practices/customs is coeval to contemporary society, where at different points in the globe, different societies maintain very different practices in the way they function in the world, whether in regards to etiquette, driving practices, political systems, legal norms, and more.

GATEWAY ACTIVITY

Discovering a New Perspective

For this assignment, students are to find a person that participates in a culture or social organization that is different from their own (*not one they are familiar*); this could include a Tai Chi instructor, the owner of a local ethnic food market, or your neighbor who is a regular judge and enthusiast in national dog show competitions. Students will need to set up an interview with the subject, and establish questions relevant to the individual identified. Questions may include:

How did you get involved with this organization or practice? What kinds of beliefs are shared by this culture or social organization? What general perceptions or preconceived ideas are connected to this culture or social organization?

Beyond the interview, students will need to research the culture, or social organization/practice connected with their subject. The final paper should be a portrait and profile of the subject, and the culture or social organization of the subject. The final question students should address at the end of their profile is: After interviewing and researching your subject, what new perspective have you gained about [said subject] and the world? In other words, how has this profile enriched how you view the community in which you live?

Objects of Place: Seeing Past the Familiar

So often the places we are familiar with are discussed in relation to the social constructs that are commonly used to identify a location, whether identifying a home, office, school, bookstore, coffee shop, restaurant, etc. The list could go on and on. As a person goes about their life, they enter in and out of these places, knowing these spaces by the way they function to fulfill specific needs, to eat, buy a cup of coffee, find a new book, etc. In many ways, our actions, habits, and familiarity of any one place can lead to a kind of blindness about a place. When Object Oriented Ontology (OOO) scholar Timothy Morton writes about his experience being driven to the airport by shuttle bus, and the driver takes him through alternate routes through his small town, he is jarred into the unfamiliar, seeing his small town from a completely different perspective. He writes, "what is most uncanny is the sense of *familiarity* you have just left behind" (66). This shared experience presents interesting questions for discursive inquiry.

First and foremost, what happens when one looks about and begins to see a place as made up of objects? What happens when one begins to no longer define a place by its social construct (i.e. “home,” “office,” “bookstore”), but rather retain distance before judgment, a stance that sees a place as always in flux, one that precludes any type of reified category of definition? From this perspective, a place becomes a rich site for analysis, one where every object is not simply background, but agents of influence in our relation to it. In this way, place is a site of interposing relations. The more one begins to engage in these relations with objects, taking note to what they mean, what they represent to you, what they reinforce, what they embody, and how they instantiate familiarity, the more one begins to see unconscious forces working upon our thoughts, beliefs, actions, and motives.

This influence of objects is magnified when considering the things a person carries and keeps close in their life. There are many everyday objects that have meaning beyond itself. In my own personal life, some objects that hold particular significance includes: a harmonica that belonged to my grandfather, as well as a couple cardigan sweaters that belonged to my other grandfather (both deceased). More general objects include: a watch given by my former employer after 5 years of service; a notepad from South Korea given as a gift from a friend; and rosary beads that hang from my car’s rearview mirror purchased in New Mexico. These objects may appear as simple things about me, but with a little introspection and conscientious consideration, they embody more than what they appear, and influence in ways that connect me to lost family members, work experiences, ties to friends, and former trips.

For others, there are some objects that can have a more ominous influence. Those suffering with particular addictions might be tempted when walking past an open bottle, or a half-lit cigarette. A person with a violent history of abuse might find trigger objects in seeing a raised hand, a taut belt, or frayed rope. A person suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) might be stirred when hearing the backfire of an engine, or the rumbling of a passing train.

Though these objects may illustrate how the places we inhabit are filled with objects that influence in sometimes deeply personal ways, it is important to note that even innocuous objects can influence a person in a whole host of ways. Inevitably, in daily life, objects find ways of influence, whether a faucet that needs a little extra pressure, pushing down to make it turn, or extra rainfall contributing to grass that needs to be mowed to avoid scorn from neighbors, or wall-mounted air conditioning units that need to be manually turned on and off—all the while knowing that the summer heat must be weighed against a personal budget and electric bill.

The objects of our surroundings, the places that a person inhabits, are filled with influence in a variety of ways when one begins to see past the familiar. These objects of place are significant points of consideration when beginning to analyze the influence of our surroundings.

GATEWAY ACTIVITY

Life is Like an [Insert Object]

This gateway activity was originally inspired by the movie, *Forrest Gump*, and the line, "Life is like a box of chocolates—you never know what you're going to get." The simple analogy of a "box of chocolates" creates a unique perspective

that reframes the complexities of life in a way that opens up new ways of thinking about life, discursively. For this assignment, students are to go outside the classroom and find an object. This could include a blade of grass, a tree, the sky, a rock, etc. The student should preferably find a natural object, but the assignment can create surprising results if the student chooses a door, building, or utility truck. After identifying the object, students are required to write up a description of the object. When they return to the classroom, students share their object and their description.

Next, students are required to look up the word in the Oxford English Dictionary (be it grass, sky, or door). By looking up the word, students discover how a simple word can have an extensive historical background and etymological development.

Finally, students are to write up a description of how "Life is like [said object]." By having students develop their own analogy for life, they are forced to grapple with reframing their own personal conceptions of life through the perspective of this object, re-imagining the possibilities and physical/material features connected with the object—as well as the discursive constructs etymologically tied to the object.

Sacred Places and Memorial Spaces

When exploring place beyond the conceptions of everyday locations ("home," "office," etc.) and everyday objects ("harmonica," "rosary beads," etc.), and considering a place that is publicly defined as sacred, honored, or memorial, I am reminded of the work Gregory Clark achieves in *Rhetorical Landscapes in America*. As a keen example of

analyzing a specific type of place, Clark takes great care in analyzing how "landscapes" in America operate rhetorically. This analysis is achieved by illustrating how a place can both embody materiality and symbolic meaning. In the work he explains:

> *Landscape* is not the same as *land*. *Land* is material, a particular object, while *landscape* is conceptual. When people act as tourists, they leave the *land* where they make their home to encounter *landscapes*. *Land* becomes *landscape* when it is assigned the role of symbol, and as symbol it functions rhetorically. When landscapes are publicized—when they are shared in public discourse or in the nondiscursive form of what I am calling a public experience—they do the rhetorical work of symbolizing a common home and, thus, a common identity. (9)

For Clark, landscapes are conceptualized ideas/symbols in public discourse, symbols that when looking at national parks such as Yellowstone, embody a "common home," and "common identity" (ibid). These particular landscapes become sites of influence, not only in terms of public perception, but national identity as well.

This nuanced definition between the materiality of "land," and the conceptual construct of "landscape," illustrates an important perspective when analyzing place, namely the cross between considering the materiality (made up of objects) and the public discursive constructs surrounding a place—or rather conceptions based through language, thought, belief, experience, and ideology.

There are many places one could use to illustrate this point: Mount Rushmore, Pearl Harbor, Statue of Liberty, and many others. Each of these places embodies more than what meets the eye. They are symbols of revered presidents, lost soldiers, and ideals

for liberty and justice. Each place is rich with symbolic meaning, conceptualized in ways that influence how a person understands history, convictions of war, and national identity. Place such as these illustrate the significance in Clark's approach to analyzing landscapes, but it is also important to mention that the symbolic nature of these places, and the influence they wield, are often not so easily defined. They can be complicated places to understand. Case in point is the 9/11 Memorial Museum, a place that has stirred some recent controversy.

In an article published by Steve Kandell entitled, "The Worst Day of My Life is Now New York's Hottest Tourist Attraction," Kandell shares his personal experience with visiting the 9/11 Memorial Museum before it opened to the general public. Kandell lost his sister in the World Trade Center during the terrorist attack on September 11th. In his account, Kandell makes a poignant realization during his visit, reflecting how strange it is to be in a place dedicated to remembering an event that was so devastating to his own personal life. He writes, "I think now of every war memorial I ever yawned through on a class trip, how someone else's past horror was my vacant diversion and maybe I learned something." Kandell highlights how a personal experience with an event can dramatically shape how a person conceptualizes a place. These sites, though constructed to symbolically represent certain ideas, are always processed individually, whether the absent-minded child that yawns, or the person who sees and feels a different story. Each person's experience can shape how these conceptions take form.

Kandell goes on to describe a location in the museum only accessible by appointment, and with approval by the medical examiner's office. It is a place that is not operated by the museum, and is referred to as "the reflection room." In this place, family

members of those victims who were never found can sit in front of a corridor separated by glass. Behind the glass, lined from floor to ceiling, are cabinets filled with the remains of those who were unidentifiable. Kandell writes, "My sister is among the many for whom there have been no remains recovered whatsoever. Vaporized. So there's no grave to visit, there never will be. Just this theatrically lit Ikea warehouse behind a panel of glass." The experience of visiting this place leaves Kandell with a critical question at the end of his article. He writes, "What *is* the right place to store pounds of unidentifiable human tissue so that future generations can pay their respects?" The question is one that is hard to answer, even as he acquiesces to the room's design.

Kandell's shared experience illustrates how sacred places, when publicly constructed, can be complicated sites of influence—leaving one to question what is an appropriate place? This question is compounded when considering the controversy the museum received over the gift shop, where visitors can buy commemorative key chains, t-shirts, and jewelry (*New York Post*, "The 9/11 Museum's Absurd Gift Shop"; *CNN* "9/11 Memorial Museum's Gift Shop Sparks Outrage With Some Families"). Though no easy answers exist for Kandell's question, his experience drives home the point that places are processed individually, and that a person's experiences can dramatically shape the meaning behind the façade of a place.

GATEWAY ACTIVITY

Analyzing Space

For this assignment, students are to identify, visit, and analyze an important place. This could include a special monument, museum, local graveyard, etc. Students should take time to analyze this space, considering questions that include: How is

this place constructed? Who visits? What purpose does this place serve? What elements give it a special identity? Look closely at what is seen and what is unseen in this space. Are there memories attached to this place? What sounds echo here? Describe how the space changes depending upon the time of day (morning, noon, or night). Is there personal attachment to this place? Why? What lingers in your memory? Feel free to take multiple perspectives.

A Place in Time

It might be odd at first to consider how time is connected with place, but with closer examination, one discovers that much of our sense of place is enmeshed with time. Work hours are set. Meetings are scheduled. Outings with friends are organized. Much of a person's daily life is constructed around time, and as a result, the place a person goes is influenced by time. But what kind of influence does time have on a place? It is a question that requires multiple perspectives.

In Claude Monet's famous series of impressionist paintings called "Haystacks," one discovers how different points in time can dramatically change how a place is perceived. Even though the field is the same, the scene changes; color and light alter with time. Monet's paintings capture how a place is always in flux with time—pending time of day, weather, and season—and that perception is never fixed. Yet this perspective highlights another important point to consider when looking at the influence of time on place, and this is considering the viewer.

Like Monet's paintings, a person's perception of place can vary widely pending time. And in psychology and cognitive science, time perception has become a significant area of study. Current research illustrates how time perception from individual to

individual is not constant, but varied. Factors include age, linguistic development, and cultural forces. In a study between English and Mandarin speakers, researchers discovered that linear notions of time are influenced culturally, showing how English speakers tend to conceptualize time horizontally, from left to right, while Mandarin speakers conceptualize time vertically, from top to bottom (Furhman et al 1305). The language a society uses to talk about time can also influence how it is conceptualized. For example, English speakers rely heavily upon spatial metaphors to designate aspects of time, whether *long*, *short*, *forward*, *backward*, *ahead*, *behind* (Casasanto et al 388); and these linguistic patterns have implications for how a child develops conceptions of time. Research by H. Clark (1973) illustrates that children readily acquire spatial terms such as *here* and *there*, before they acquire temporal terms such as *now* and *then*, and this is "consistent with the proposal that temporal terms are acquired as metaphorical extensions of spatial terms" for children as they develop (qtd. in Casasanto et al. 388-89).

Current research highlights that our conceptions of time have direct correspondence to our spatial notions for place. Even the etymology for "time" has roots in Latin that connect it spatially. In an article published by *The American Journal of Philology* (1880), F.D. Allen writes of the term:

> The word [tempus] referred originally to space; the meaning 'time' is later, and came about in this way: the quarters of the heavens are thought of as corresponding to and standing for the parts of the day and year; east is morning, south noon, and so on. (qtd. in Casasanto et al. 389)

What at first seemed like disparate entities (place and time), a closer look illustrates a close bond that is entwined and complicated in various ways. In the "Transcendental

Aesthetics" found in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, he highlights how time and space are critical aspects tied to cognitive reasoning. In M.M. Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, and his essay, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin coins time and space together into the "chronotope" as a theoretical perspective, one where "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). From this perspective, one contemplates how place and time characterize literary developments, where discourse is embedded by both, and must be contemplated as such.

The influence that time has on a person's conception of place, is one that is mutual in the sense that place has an influence on a person's conception of time. History, culture, and language practices illustrate how the two are inseparably linked. And as one begins to explore the influence that place has, one must be sensitive as well to the conceptions that time has on the subject and place in question.

GATEWAY ACTIVITY

Keeping a Journal

This gateway activity is about keeping a journal. At the beginning of the semester, students are to keep a weekly journal. Before beginning, students are to identify a place that they can sit, observe, and write about. This could include a coffee shop, park bench, patio, public swimming pool, etc. Students are not allowed to choose a location inside their house (including bedroom or living room). Every week, students are to sit in this location for 10 minutes, making observations of what is

happening in this place. Then, students are to write up their observations and reflections in their journal—seeing how a place can change over time.

Place Pedagogy in Composition

By exploring theories of place, and developing classroom practices in conjunction with theories of place, students become engaged in seeing how their discursive practices, situated within the social and material conditions of their experience, has immediate influence in "shaping knowledge and consciousness" as well as the "version of reality" they know. By becoming aware of this influence, students become active agents in either reinforcing this reality, or counteracting it. This awareness is a form of critical theory and classroom practice that is an extension to the type of pedagogy Berlin actively promotes with SER. This approach—though lacking a political bent—aligns with Berlin's fundamental beliefs in what a writing course should achieve with students. Berlin writes in *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*:

> When freshmen learn to write or speak, they are learning more than how to perform an instrumental task, useful in getting through college and in preparing for professional life. They are learning assumptions about what is real and what is illusory, how to know one from the other, how to communicate the real, given the strengths and limitations of human nature, and finally, how language works. (2)

A pedagogy informed by place in a first-year composition class not only helps students become more aware of the social and material conditions that influence their subjective position, they become critically aware of how discursive acts and signifying practices can act as a means of mediating and transforming those social and material conditions—

"learning assumptions about what is real and what is illusory . . . and finally, how language works" (ibid).

Finally, a pedagogy informed by place, and the gateway activities developed by this pedagogy, attempts to create a classroom practice that engages students in new ways—ways that seek active and eager participation. As Hillocks writes, "Perhaps the most important principle in designing and sequencing is to ensure that the students enjoy doing the work" (180). Of course, this is easier said than done. But I hope the six themes presented here, and the gateway activities connected with each theme, propels innovation and inspiration in developing further classroom practices informed by place.

Notes

[1] My use of place is broadly conceived to include the "social and material conditions" that surround discursive practices as Berlin outlines in *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Culture.*

[2] Much of the assumptions for teaching composition in Hillocks' work align with Berlin, and the social-epistemic beliefs around discursive practices. Both share constructivist epistemologies that inform their pedagogical aims in a writing classroom. Hillocks writes, "The epistemological theory underlying everything argued throughout this book is that we construct knowledge, or what we take to be knowledge, and make a case for it" (214).

[3] One might also consider Sharon Crowley's *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*, a work that "demonstrate[s] that the tactics typically used in liberal argument—empirically based reason and factual evidence—are not highly valued by Christian apocalyptists, who rely instead on revelation, faith, and biblical interpretation to ground claims" (3). Her analysis and investigation of religious and political differences present cogent strategies for developing "civil discourse," both within the classroom and outside.

[4] It should be noted that Berlin's theories surrounding social-epistemic rhetoric in *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Culture* is deeply established in the field as a cultural studies approach to teaching composition (see Byron Hawk 212; Diana George et al., 97).

[5] This call, by Sirc, for incorporating more alternative forms of composition is also linked with other contemporary scholars (see Diana George, "From Analysis to Design" and Jody Shipka, "A Multimodal Task-Based Framework for Composing").

CONCLUSION

As I sit in this coffee shop, like so many others before today, I contemplate how I should write my conclusion. In my effort to find a place to begin, I stumbled upon the Afterword to James Berlin's *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*, written by Janice M. Lauer in the wake of his death. It is a moving tribute, and invokes the spirit behind the work and the philosophy espoused by Berlin. Lauer writes:

> This book, a revisioning of the field of English, was dear to Jim. He had. [sic] a passion for the profession, seeing its potential for empowering students to critique and revise the cultural conditions shaping their lives. A fighter for social justice, he considered the current material and political arrangements in the Western world as marginalizing and disempowering many. Opposing these conditions, he maintained, was an important mission of the field of English, with composition in the forefront. (219)

In many ways, Berlin's work was a call to arms, exposing the social and cultural forces that perpetuate and reinforce unequal political and economic disparity, doing so in the face of an increasingly disenfranchised populace and an academic profession that was drifting further into a postmodern efficacy that might be characterized as apathetic (or at the very least, more interested in the contingency and indeterminacy of texts and meaning).

In SER, one discovers a theoretical framework that provides a means for understanding signifying practices, a means to analyze how signifying practices operate within the historically situated conditions in which it is produced, and discern the social, cultural, and ideological forces that signifying practices instantiate. And more than this, SER provides a modicum of agency for individuals to reclaim their own subject positioning in relation to it all through critique and conscientious use of discursive and nondiscursive formations, even within the *fragmented* era of *rationality*, as Faigley so aptly describes of postmodernism.

It is toward this end that SER operates as a framework for continued research in composition studies, doing so in service of a creating a better, more inclusive signifying practice that democratizes, and actively promotes social ideals in the service of a greater good. But achieving this vision is a difficult task. Lauer goes on to write:

> Jim was impatient, however, with cultural studies theorists outside the field of composition whom he met at conferences, because he found them ironically trapped in theorizing, without attention or dedication to praxis, particularly ignoring the role that composition instruction could play in both critique and the construction of counter-discursive practices. (220)

As Berlin rightly recognized, composition studies, and the actual practice of teaching students how to critically evaluate texts—as well as compose texts—is the place where true change can begin. It is at this point that one has a chance to empower students to be more aware, critical, and judicious in recognizing that signifying practices have consequences. And with a more educated populace, trained in this way, a better vision

can be achieved for society—one in which each person upholds democratic ideals that enact social, cultural, and ideological forces that fosters a better world.

Toward this end, this dissertation has attempted to extend Berlin's SER to explore all the ways that the social and material conditions connected with place might be analyzed and adapted for practical purposes—discerning all the ways that place is composed, and how this informs the way we teach, read, and analyze discourse. In the introduction, I outline specific research questions that informed how the dissertation proceeds. These questions include:

- How might certain signifying practices be connected with the surrounding social and material conditions in which that signifying practice (or production) is expressed?
- If place and signifying practice create a "version of reality," what are the ethical implications?
- Can theories of place be used as a method for textual analysis?
- Might theories of place, when used for textual analysis, uncover hidden motives and influences of a text, whether in terms of ontology, epistemology, belief, value, thought, and/or action?
- Can the study of place be used as a method for teaching writing? In other words, how might the social and material conditions that surround and influence discourse become critical aspects to explore in the composing process?

Each section of the dissertation answers these questions with vary degrees, recognizing that there is more work to be done. Within the literature review in the introduction, one discovers that signifying practices are connected with the surrounding social and material

conditions in which it is produced and expressed, whether looking at classic sophistic theories of "nomos" and "physis," or contemporary theories of the "rhetorical situation" outlined by Bitzer and Vatz (*among the many other perspectives*).

Chapter one looks at the ethical implications that such signifying practices can have within the social and material conditions in which it is expressed, and how different theoretical frameworks can help in exposing those implications. While exploring alternative frameworks, chapter one illustrates how SER provides the fullest range for being able to identify, isolate, and analyze outside social, political, economic, ideological, and material forces operating within the discourse under analysis—and how that discourse has the ability to perpetuate, instantiate, and reinforce hegemonic forces. In other words, discourse has the ability to shape the "version of reality" one knows and understands. SER then becomes a means to analyze and counteract these signifying practices through discursive and nondiscursive means. In this way, SER provides agency for individuals to re-claim their own subject positioning through analysis, critique, and counter-discursive meta-narratives. Toward this end, chapters two, three, and four become extensions of how SER can be used as a theoretical framework to re-read historical texts, analyze contemporary texts for ontological significations, and develop new methods for teaching composition. Each chapter extends SER in ways that specifically account for the social and material conditions connected with discourse.

Chapter two and three explore how place can be used as a method for textual analysis. Chapter two looks at the historical text (and discursive context) of Plato's *Phaedrus*. By re-reading this dialogue through how the place of the text is discursively constructed, the reader is re-situated (and re-framed) to see the world through Plato's

eyes. By doing so, the meaning of the text is presented from a new angle, with new meanings emerging in the process. In this way, this approach to re-reading historical texts uncovers hidden influences and meanings previously unobserved. Unlike this historical analysis, chapter three looks at the influence signifying practices hold ontologically speaking, and how a contemporary analysis of place can help expose this influence.

Chapter three is a textual analysis, but one that attempts to isolate the influence of a recurrent signifying practice across a sampling of texts (automotive advertisements). In order to show how automotive advertisements are a recurrent signifying practice, with conventionalized meaning across texts, this chapter embraces a mix-method analysis, one that uses New Rhetoric School of Genre as a method to isolating the conventions of this recurrent signifying practice. Once the conventions are isolated, this analysis uses SER as a theoretical framework to isolate the social, political, economic, and material conditions that play into the texts. Once these forces are exposed, one discovers hidden motives and influences of the texts—influences that correspond to troubling ontological positioning in terms of belief, values, thoughts, and actions.

Finally, chapter four answers how the study of place can be used as a new method for teaching composition. By re-evaluating the literature in composition studies, new gateway activities are developed that attempt to establish how pedagogy informed by place present alternative strategies for developing critical awareness with students as they learn to write. The social and material conditions that influence writing provide a means for students to explore how their world, and their subject positioning, is constructed through discourse.

All four chapters ultimately align with the original argument (thesis) of the dissertation. It is the belief that "place" is a discursive construct that emerges through language by an individual, in conjunction with the social and material conditions of a particular historical moment. As a result, the way one composes texts is discursively influenced by "place," and this has consequences to the way one makes meaning, the way one understands knowledge, the way one interprets/analyzes history, the way one understand who they are in relation to others, and the way one teaches writing.

Looking forward, I believe there is more work to be done in this area of scholarship, with more questions to be answered—especially in relation to our increasing engagement with technology and research in the digital humanities. For instance, what implications do theories of place have in online/digital environments? Do social and material conditions exist within online forums and social media? How might different social media platforms influence subject positioning? If signifying practices are historical situated, how might digital signifying practices correlate and/or transcend historical positioning?

These new emerging questions signal a need to return to the labyrinth that is the field of composition and rhetoric scholarship. Like my early childhood memory of walking the woods near Eagle Lake, I realize that scholarship is often about getting lost and finding your way through. Looking back over this dissertation, and the process that has gone into writing this dissertation, it is my hope that the work presented here treads a new pathway in the field, one that extends what Berlin started so many years ago.

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