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RED SCARE RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION: EARLY COLD WAR  
EFFECTS ON UNIVERSITY WRITING INSTRUCTION, 1934-1954

A Dissertation

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By

Ronald Clark Brooks, Jr.

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Red Scare Rhetoric and Composition:  
Early Cold War Effects on University Writing Instruction, 1934-1954

A Dissertation

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### Introduction: Three Keywords in Composition

Let us imagine, as a way of beginning this project, that it is March 9, 1954, right at the peak of Senator McCarthy's political power—if not the peak of America's second Red Scare. A composition teacher, who has just recently acquired a television set, is in the middle of grading a stack of themes when he remembers that See It Now is just starting its broadcast, another exposé on McCarthyism. He puts his themes aside so that he can watch. It *is* a “good evening”—this is not an entirely unlikely scenario—and it also happens to be the first time that our composition teacher has seen McCarthy on a television screen.<sup>1</sup>

Until recently, our teacher has kept himself politically informed by reading his daily newspaper and by listening to the radio. The USSR's development of a workable atomic bomb, the “fall” of China to communism, and our recent detonation of a hydrogen bomb are of greater concern to our teacher than the new “enemy within,” but he has read about the Hollywood Ten, Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs, and Senator Joe McCarthy. He has listened, with some skepticism, to a few of the trials on the radio.

Since we are imagining, let us say too that our teacher—though he identifies himself as a liberal and does not completely sympathize with the plight of former Communists—believes what Truman had once said about McCarthyism:

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<sup>1</sup> Rosteck explains that “where in 1947 only roughly 1 in 100 homes had television receivers, by 1955 nearly 80 in 100 owned at least one receiver” (Rosteck 23).

It is the use of the Big Lie and the unfounded accusation against any citizen, in the name of Americanism and security. It is the rise to power of a demagogue who lives on untruth; it is the spread of fear and the destruction of faith at every level of our society. (qtd. in Rosteck 14)

While he certainly believes that the Soviet Union cannot be ignored as a military threat in the new political climate, he also believes that McCarthy and others like him have been exploiting America's fears for their own political gain. As a writing teacher, he is not only amazed at how unreasonable and nonfactual McCarthy's arguments are, he finds it incredible—and he still uses that word in the old fashioned sense—how effective his polemics tend to be.

Recently, though, he has witnessed a change, for even his conservative friends—when he has the energy to push the point with them—have started to agree with him about McCarthy. Our teacher has no way of knowing this, but the very television show that he is watching will contribute to this change in public opinion. Over forty years later, Robert Ivie explains this phenomenon in his essay “Diffusing Cold War Demagoguery: Murrow versus McCarthy on ‘See It Now.’” Ivie argues:

McCarthy's political power had peaked by mid-1953. Thereafter, a crescendo of criticism had begun to arise in the press and Senate, and at the turn of the year a previously reticent Republican administration was beginning to make noises of disapproval. Eisenhower himself had become publicly exasperated by McCarthy's attacks on the army. Even those who supported McCarthy were tiring of his tactics. (83)

Ivie continues his argument by contending that this was the right moment for Edward Murrow to “mobilize the growing sentiment against a man who in many people’s view had gone too far and had gotten too rough” (83). Looking back, we can see that Murrow’s timing could not have been better. McCarthy “was too distracted by the impending Army-McCarthy hearings to do much more than take a few mean swipes at his opponent on television” (83). These swipes, which had been so effective for McCarthy in the past, would contribute to his own undoing.

It is difficult to surmise what watching See It Now is like for our teacher. He has certainly seen pictures of McCarthy, he has even listened to some of the McCarthy hearings on the radio, but nothing could have prepared him for having this demagogue captured on his television set in his own living room. Could this really be the man who, interrogating Reed Harris on the radio just months before, had seemed so menacing? On the screen, McCarthy looks smaller, more remote. Our teacher discovers the incidental fact that the Senator belches and picks his nose in public, but, more importantly, he witnesses McCarthy’s arguments being framed in such a way that it seems inevitable to him that he will soon fall. Edward Murrow has achieved, from our teacher’s perspective, what he had previously believed only the most sophisticated writers could accomplish: the undercutting of a fallacious argument with irony.

In previous exposés, Murrow had shown McCarthy’s bullying and browbeating techniques in action. Ivie argues that the impression that McCarthy left on the American viewer watching See It Now was primarily one of darkness—the very same imagery that McCarthy had used to portray

Communists. Murrow opposed this darkness “to the values of an open society, values which Eisenhower had reiterated on national television as recently as November 23, 1953—just three and a half months before Murrow’s [first] report on McCarthy” (90). Though our teacher could not have known this at the time, by April 6, when McCarthy would respond to Murrow, it would only lead more fully to his undoing, because McCarthy would answer Murrow’s charges with even more metaphors of darkness. As Ivie puts it:

These metaphorical clusters implicitly identified McCarthy with the darkness into which he himself had cast Communism, thereby opposing the tyranny of his demagoguery to the enlightenment of freedom for which Murrow and the republic stood. Together, these clusters conformed to and reinforced the negative symbolic context of McCarthyism that had emerged prior to the broadcast. The metaphorical substructure of Murrow’s accusation set up an interpretive formula which McCarthy’s response served to validate: Communism = darkness = tyranny = McCarthy. The turn against McCarthy was constructed to take advantage of his own momentum. (88)

This formula, and the fact that it appears that reason and enlightenment won out over McCarthyism in this particular case, has intriguing implications for this study. But what is most important for us to consider, as we begin to contemplate the effects of the Cold War on the field of writing instruction, is what goes on in our teacher’s mind before he goes back to grading his themes.

He wonders if his students, though he has never mentioned McCarthy in his classes, would recognize the fallaciousness of his arguments: ad hominem attacks, circular reasoning, either-or propositions, red herrings... just to name a few. He wonders, because he has never really brought it up, what his students think about this new war-that-is-not-a-war, the Soviet Union, and communism in general. These are important issues, he thinks, but recent events have made him cautious about bringing any type of controversial subjects into the classroom. He is only, after all, a part-time instructor.

For a moment, though, he reflects on the possibility of looking more particularly at the abuses of rhetoric that McCarthy engages in. He could include abuses of rhetoric from both liberal and conservative politicians, to present a more balanced view to his students. His chair might allow him to deviate from the standard units on expository and descriptive writing if he made his case objectively. But this thought passes as he goes back to grading the themes in front of him: descriptions of the rooms that his students lived in before they arrived at the university. "They are remarkably similar rooms," he thinks, which triggers a thought about the *Brown versus Board of Education* case, which he has just recently read about, which is quietly making its way to the Supreme Court at this time. He wonders too for just a moment what his students might think about that, but this thought passes just as quickly as he simultaneously lies and does not lie to himself about the quality of the theme in front of him.

It creates a "dominant impression," as Brooks and Warren put it, but he finds himself wanting more from the theme than the writer has given him so far.

How can he articulate this thought? What does he want? More precise descriptions? A better sense of who this young man is through his description of the room? Sure, he wants these things and tells him, so that he might get an even better grade on the next assignment. But there is something else, something he cannot possibly write down on this student's paper but that he would like to clarify, at least for his own purposes, to make him a better teacher, a better citizen, a better human being. He looks out the window and through the darkness for just a moment. The thought passes. It is already later in the evening than he had imagined, and he still has sixty-six themes left to grade.

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This opening anecdote, though plausible, proves very little about the effects of the Cold War on the field of writing instruction. I only hope that by beginning here we can get a better sense of the overall goal of this project: to clarify the often-contrary aspirations that teaching composition brings to our daily lives. Because the articulation of these goals becomes even more difficult in politically repressive times, it is necessary to delineate, as precisely as we can, the reasons why the Cold War atmosphere circumscribed the field of writing instruction.

These reasons are not necessarily easy to articulate, and this difficulty may be the reason why scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric often make very general assumptions about writing instruction in the early Cold War period. If we choose to deal with the fifties at all, we often pass over them casually and mark our field's origin in the early sixties, as Stephen North does in his landmark

study The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field.

Though they were certainly tumultuous times, the sixties mark a time when we can more easily outline our disciplinary history. After WWII, and especially after the National Defense Education Act was expanded to include the field of English, more people attending school needed composition classes (Bartholomae 41). This practical need, coupled with what some would consider a backlash against McCarthyism, allowed those of us in the field of English to take a more active role in the shaping of our discipline.

For those of us who view writing and meaning making as inherently political acts, the sixties and the seventies mark a time of positive change in the course of writing instruction, on both the theoretical and the practical plane. No longer would writing teachers be confined to the teaching of formalistic rhetorical and grammatical procedures and the elitist and exclusionary politics that such teaching reinforces. Instead, we would teach grammatical and rhetorical principles by encouraging students to generate personal and social contexts for their writing. Because students would be involved in the writing process, as active instead of passive participants, they would—at least theoretically—find themselves empowered. They would discover that they were authorities on subjects, and as students became authorities they would enter into more democratic relationships with the students in their classes, and with their teachers. Democracy could spread from this ground up.

Recently, composition historians have started to uncover knowledge about writing instruction in the Progressive Era.<sup>2</sup> They have discovered much of the same democratic idealism in writing teachers, the same belief that writing is an inherently political act, the same hopes for true equality among all people, and many of the same educational practices that emerge from this belief. There is still a great deal more that we can learn by studying these progressive-era pedagogies. As scholars continue to uncover this fascinating period, we will find educational practices that worked and ones that failed, and this too will enrich both our theory and our practice in the field of composition and rhetoric.

This dissertation, however, will not focus on the positive changes that have occurred in our field, but will focus instead on what many would consider a time of repression, the early Cold War era in the United States. “The fifties were,” as the historian Ellen W. Schrecker puts it, “the heyday of consensus history, modernization theory, structural functionalism, and new criticism. Mainstreams scholars celebrated the status quo, and the end of ideology dominated intellectual discourse” (339). It is generally assumed that the fifties were a time when there was a tremendous payoff for teachers of writing to view composition in the academy as an inherently *apolitical* act, to focus on formalistic rhetorical and grammatical principles, and to repress the political implications of this teaching philosophy. This rhetorical philosophy has commonly been called

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<sup>2</sup> Among these are Katherine H. Adams’s Progressive Politics and the Training of America’s Persuaders, Adams’s A Group of Their Own: College Writing Courses and American Women Writers, 1880-1940, John C. Brereton’s The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925, and Susan Kates’s Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education: 1885-1937.

current-traditional rhetoric, and many scholars have defined and redefined the boundaries of this apolitical rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> A closer investigation of the fifties, however, proves that not all writing instruction in the fifties should be classified as current-traditional. To understand what happened and why it happened, we must analyze the historical and rhetorical circumstances of the early Cold War era.

In the broadest sense, this dissertation hopes to discover to what extent current-traditional rhetoric pervaded writing instruction in the fifties and, to the extent that it was pervasive, what specific political function current-traditional rhetoric played in the early Cold War period. This is not an easy task. In terms of writing instruction, the fifties seem to be a void, difficult to classify and visible only by looking at what surrounds it. The historian John Patrick Diggins explains this phenomenon best when talking about the fifties in general:

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Young describes the features of current-traditional rhetoric as follows: The emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs; the classification of discourse into description, narration, exposition, and argument; the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis); the preoccupation with the informal essay and the research paper; and so on. (qtd. in Crowley 13) In The Methodical Memory, Crowley complicates and “elaborate[s] Young’s ‘and so on’ as follows:”

Current-traditional rhetoric occults the mentalism that underlies its introspective theory of invention; it subscribes to the notion that “subjects”—the “matter” of discourses—are mental configurations whose existence is ontologically prior to their embodiment in discourse; it prefers the discursive movement from generalization to specification; it concentrates on expository discourse; it recommends that the inventional scheme devised for exposition be used in any discursive situation; and it translates invention out of the originating mind and onto the page. In other words, this rhetoric assumes that the process of invention can be graphically displayed in discourse. (13)

Difficult to classify politically, the forties and fifties represented neither reform nor reaction, neither liberal activism in the sense of social justice nor conservative consolidation and a return to the old order. Yet it would be wrong to claim, as some writers have, that the era was merely a period of passivity and postponement, as though nothing important happened until the radical sixties came along to awaken America from its ideological slumbers. (xiii)

My investigation of writing instruction in the fifties will prove that it is equally wrong to claim that the fifties represented passivity in the realm of composition and communication. Not a time for liberal activism, the fifties, nevertheless, have something to teach us about how composition and rhetoric programs should ethically respond to a repressive political climate.

While there are good reasons to champion the rhetoric and composition theories of the sixties and beyond, Robin Varnum is correct when she argues:

The unfortunate effect of polarizing old and new developments in composition... has been the devaluation of much that occurred before 1960. The notion that writing used to be taught in one tired old way has prevented many of those who currently teach writing from seeing the dynamic vitality of an era which... was as lively as any other. (15)

While her study focuses on the writing practices of one university during the early Cold War era, this study will paint with a much broader brush, analyzing more explicitly the historical, political, and disciplinary movements that influenced the

field of writing instruction from 1934-1954. This is another way of providing the type of revision that Varnum argues we need.

We generally know that campuses in the 1950s were not safe havens from the Cold War struggles that affected the broader American community. Red Scare politics had a discernable effect on the teaching of writing before and during the early fifties. Toward the end of the forties and in the early fifties, politicians hunted out Communists and fellow travelers within our schools and universities. The common wisdom about the early fifties suggests that professors during the early Cold War era were afraid to bring political issues into the classroom—no matter how “objectively” they might be able to do it. There is certainly truth to this assertion, but this gloss on the history, rhetoric, and pedagogy of the period minimizes the tragic manner in which the political and cultural climate suppressed the pedagogical potential of this age.

While many historians have looked at the effects of McCarthyism on campuses, many of them have looked only at individual cases.<sup>4</sup> While these cases are very valuable, they do not help us see the influence of McCarthyism on rhetoric and writing generally. The two studies that have looked globally at the effects of McCarthyism on universities have focused on how the aggregate of individual cases affected universities on the whole, and not on any one particular

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<sup>4</sup> Three fascinating case studies are Lionel S. Lewis’s The Cold War and Academic Governance: The Lattimore Case at Johns Hopkins, David R. Holmes’s Stalking the Academic Communist: Intellectual Freedom and the Firing of Alex Novikoff, and Charles H. McCormick’s This Nest of Vipers: McCarthyism and Higher Education in the Mundel Affair, 1951-52.

disciple.<sup>5</sup> The only study to date that has looked at the effects of McCarthyism on one particular disciple is John McCumber's Time in the Ditch.

In this study, McCumber analyzes the effects of McCarthyism on the field of philosophy. Arguing that there was a tremendous “philosophical payoff” (xix) for philosophers to disengage from the political and cultural sphere in order to focus on “a timeless, selfless quest of truth” (127) in the McCarthy era, McCumber constructs a “post-McCarthy paradigm.” “I call this paradigm,” he writes in his conclusion,

“situating reason” to draw attention to an odd fact about us human beings: that although we are, as individuals and groups, always parts of larger but temporary states of affairs, we vary between awareness and forgetfulness of that fact. We may need to be reminded both that we are situated and of what the salient constituents of our current situation are. (164)

Though he never explicitly mentions rhetoric, it deals directly with “situating reason.” In many ways, this project finds itself in conversation with the ideas that McCumber’s project illuminates (just as rhetoric and philosophy have been in conversation since Plato and the sophists). McCumber’s study, however, turns out to be more of a point of departure for this study because this project, finally, centers on what makes effective and ethical writing instruction.

While McCumber focuses on the purges of McCarthyism in the university system from 1949-1960, this study looks more broadly at Red Scare politics<sup>6</sup> and

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<sup>5</sup> These are Ellen W. Schrecker’s highly influential No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities and Lionel S. Lewis’s Cold War on Campus: A Study of the Politics of Organizational Control.

its effects on university writing instruction. This study begins in 1934, when anticommunism more forcefully re-emerged due to Depression-era conflicts, and ends in 1954, when McCarthy's political power started to wane. Analyzing that historical period in terms of its rhetoric, I extrapolate from that history to the field of English (specifically writing instruction as it would eventually evolve into composition and rhetoric), and investigate the possibilities of a context-driven pedagogy that could emerge from this historical and rhetorical moment of time.

“So long as the Cold War lasted and engaged our passions and political identities,” James Cronin argues, “scholarship suffered” (iv). We are now at a time when we can see more specifically how the early Cold War, and specifically Red Scare politics, affected our discipline. This project will argue that the Cold War circumscribed our field because the political climate at the time did not allow teachers to employ the best aims and methods that are found in a contextually bound relationship between humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies. More specifically, the political climate of the Cold War reduced humanist teaching philosophies to formalist ones, empirical teaching philosophies to objectivist ones, and progressive teaching philosophies to permissive ones. These reductive terms forced teachers to choose between conflicting, mutually exclusive epistemologies at the expense of effective and ethical teaching.

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<sup>6</sup> With some exceptions, I use the term Red Scare politics when not referring directly to events relating to McCarthy. As the historian M.J. Heale argues in his McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation 1935-1965, McCarthyism, as a term, “sits poorly with a story which began before the Second World War and continued after the Wisconsin senator's death” (xv).

Because this project argues that the best teaching occurs when there is a contextually bound relationship between humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies, a great deal hinges on how precisely these three terms are defined. This argument also requires a working definition of a “contextually bound relationship” between these three terms. The latter task may be the easier one, for by this I simply mean a relationship between the terms that is based on the individual and dynamic needs of any group of students in any particular composition classroom. This relationship is easy to define, but as the conclusion to this work will make clear, difficult to achieve in actual practice.

Humanism, empiricism, and progressivism, however, are neither easily defined nor achieved in practice—even under ideal circumstances. I try to define these terms precisely, nevertheless, even knowing how much wrangling the definition of these terms might unleash. It should be pointed out very early in this work that the formulation of these terms would not have been possible had it not been for James Berlin’s Rhetoric and Reality, as well as his further epistemological refinements in Rhetorics, Poetics and Cultures. In some ways, this study will paint with a broader brush than Berlin’s; in other ways, a finer one. This project utilizes more general terms than Berlin’s, but cites more specific historical, and especially more narrative-historical examples. This project covers a much smaller historical time period than Berlin’s, and because it does so, it is able to provide historical case studies in a way that Berlin’s broader historical projects cannot. The more general nature of my terms clearly limits the scope my

conclusions can cover, but the specificity involved with each particular case gives power, I contend, to my illustrations.

I have wrestled with the question of whether or not these three categories are dangerous terministic screens, ones that filter out aspects of the Cold War climate that do not conform to these classifications. I am aware that the end result of this project would have been different had I used, for example, idealism, rationalism, and materialism as three terms for reading the same historical period.<sup>7</sup> There are several responses to this criticism. Kenneth Burke always dealt indirectly with any terms that did not fit into his pentad's five classifications. I chose humanism, empiricism, and progressivism, as well as their corresponding reductive terms, because the historical materials that I researched suggested those terms to me. As with all categorical systems, however, the terms often overlap. Occasionally, and especially when I look at particular teaching practices, the

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<sup>7</sup> This project would have been different, also, if I would have tried to trace my three terms more specifically back to classical rhetoric throughout. There are similarities between my classification system and George Kennedy's, for example, but there are also important differences. Technical rhetoric corresponds to objective rhetoric fairly directly, but empirical rhetorics are different enough in the twentieth century to warrant a new classification system. There are also similarities between humanist rhetoric and philosophical rhetoric, of course, but the tendency of philosophical rhetoric to "to stress the validity of the message and the effect on an audience" (14-15) invites us to compare philosophical rhetoric to progressive rhetoric as well. Likewise, if sophistic rhetoric "emphasizes the speaker rather than the speech or audience and is responsible for the image of the ideal orator leading society to noble fulfillment of national ideals" (14), then we cannot help but see some of the "great mind" theories we associate with humanism today as sophistic. Because of the radical difference between classical and modern rhetoric, then, I refer to classical rhetoric, in this work, only as a means to greater rhetorical and historical understanding, not as an end, not as a way to help us better understand the classical.

categories seem to shift. These shifts, interestingly enough, help illustrate different types of contextually bound relationships between our three terms.

The best way to begin defining, then, is to start with the ways in which the broader terms differ from what I contend is their corresponding reductions. First, empiricism differs from objectivism because empiricism is, as David Wallace defines it, “the attempt to describe human behavior (or other phenomena) according to a definable, limited system” (103). Empiricism proves to be important to composition studies because, though it is a limited system, it can tell us a great deal precisely because it is definable and measurable. On a more pragmatic level, it is an important epistemology to incorporate into the teaching of writing precisely because of the authority it lends to arguments.

Objectivism, as Berlin defines it, “assert[s] that the real is located in the material world. From this perspective, only that which is empirically verifiable or which can be grounded in empirically verifiable phenomena is real” (7). Objectivism is closely related to David Wallace’s definition of positivism, which he defines as “the belief that universal laws describing human behavior (or other phenomena) can be derived from sense observations” (103). While I wholeheartedly agree with Wallace’s argument that we must disassociate empiricism from positivism (as he defines it) in our field, I refer, throughout this dissertation, to the phenomena that both Berlin and Wallace call “positivism” as “objectivism.” This is in order to correct the equating of objective theories of rhetoric, which were pervasive during the Cold War period, with the theories of

the far more radical group of positivist philosophers beginning with Comte. For Comte, as Raymond Williams explains:

positivism was not only a theory of knowledge; it was also a scheme of history and a programme of social reform. In this broader sense, positivism became in England a free-thinking and radical as well as a scientific movement. Indeed, because it was so concerned with understanding and changing society, it was met by the charge that it was not scientific enough, or not objective enough.

(Williams, Keywords 239)

Positivist epistemologies, ones that were concerned with free-thinking and radical social reform, were not at all pervasive during the Cold War period, and should not be equated with current-traditional rhetoric, as they often are. Objectivist rhetorics, however, were often used to help maintain the status quo in the Cold War political environment.

In the classroom environment, then, objectivism is a reduction of empiricism because while the latter focuses more on logos than it does on pathos and ethos, it does not do so to the exclusion of those terms. In other words: empiricism acknowledges that it is a particular type of persuasion, with its own set of mutually agreed upon discourse conventions. Objectivism, paradoxically, is a reduction precisely because it pretends to reflect universal truth at the expense of the broader rhetorical elements of ethos and pathos. Very often, in the Cold War climate, objectivism uses scientific authority as a mask for authoritarianism. Objectivism also separates us from the process of openly and continuously

searching for truth, as it works with the assumption that language reflects an already present truth.

Humanism is more difficult to define than empiricism. I make no claim, therefore, that this definition is the right one for all cases. Generally speaking, though, humanism as it relates to composition studies seems to focus less on its opposition to religion and more on what Williams describes as a combination of “post-Enlightenment ideas of history as human self-development and self-perfection” (150) and “a particular kind of learning associated with particular attitudes to culture and human development or perfection” (150). Stephen North also writes about the “humanist tradition’s reliance on what can be broadly defined as dialectic—that is, the seeking of knowledge via the deliberate confrontation of opposing points of view” (60). Berlin often refers to humanists when he discusses liberal culture and subjective rhetoric. According to Berlin, subjective rhetorics “locate truth either within the individual or within a realm that is accessible only through the individual’s internal apprehension, apart from the empirically verifiable sensory world...” (RR 11). This project will combine these three perspectives in order to say that, for our purposes, a humanist teaching philosophy is one that attempts to improve students by having them engage in dialectic with themselves, oftentimes through the reading of a cultural text.

Although Berlin associates subjective rhetorics with liberal culture and the “aristocratic and elitist rhetoric that appeared in certain Eastern colleges during the first two decades of [the twentieth] century,” (11) this project hopes to take a broader view of the humanist reliance on “cultural texts” without ignoring the

potential for elitism that such a term evokes. The term “cultural text” was almost as controversial in the early Cold War era as it is today. Many of the arguments we will explore about what types of readings should or should not be used in a composition classroom often cluster around the strife that this term evokes. In this project, the term “cultural text” does not necessarily refer to a prescribed body of literature, in the belletristic sense, but this project does not argue for the absolute exclusion of literature in the composition classroom either. Though the idea is not popular in the field of rhetoric and composition today, several engaging proposals from the early Cold War era include a broader, more culturally based, conception of literature for the purpose of teaching first-year writing.

In contrast with these more culturally based conceptions of literature, formalism is concerned with a product, that which is a record of a dialectic that has already taken place, usually within the mind of a “great writer.” Often there is an attempt in formalist thought—at least as I use it in this dissertation—to divorce form and genre from the cultural realm. In literature, the “great masters” already embody these forms. In composition, the forms are even more abstract. They simply exist as modes—narration, exposition, description, and argument—as ends in themselves. Much as objectivist teaching philosophies invite students to see language as something that should reflect an already present truth, formalist teaching philosophies invite students to use language to fulfill the requirements of an already present form. Just because formalism is a reduction of humanism, however, does not mean that humanists have no use for form, any more than

empiricists have no use for objectivity. Humanist teaching philosophies use form as a means to further dialectical thinking within an individual, to bring him or her to better thoughts.

Progressive teaching philosophies may be the most difficult of the three broader terms to define. In one sense, we can begin to define progressivism by emphasizing a difference between humanist and progressive teaching philosophies as they relate to dialectic. Progressive teaching philosophies differ from humanist ones in that they are more explicitly involved with moving dialectic from the individual realm into the social one. Berlin refers to this turn as transactional:

Transactional rhetoric is based on an epistemology that sees truth as arising out of the interaction of the elements of the rhetorical situation: an interaction of subject and object or of subject and audience or even of all the elements—subject, object, audience, and language—operating simultaneously” (RR 15)

In addition to this, he sees progressive education as “an extension of political progressivism, the optimistic faith in the possibility that all institutions could be reshaped to better serve society, making it healthier, more prosperous, and happier” (RR 58). Even though they focus on the social turn, however, there is also in progressive teaching philosophies, as Applebee makes clear, a concern with “the immediate needs and the characteristics of the student” (191).

It is precisely these two seemingly paradoxical concerns that make progressive teaching philosophies so difficult to define (not to mention to

practice). In progressivism, individual and social concerns are connected through interaction. Lawrence Cremin points out that Dewey wanted schools “that would nurture in individuals ‘a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder’” (172). He also points out: “[Jane] Addams saw education reaching out into the community, as a ‘means of propaganda’” (177). It may be that the difficulty of achieving this balance between the social and the individual concerns of progressivism led to the reduction of progressive teaching philosophies to permissive ones.

Permissiveness is the only term from which we can draw directly on our historical material for a definition. Arnold E. Needham defines permissive education as “student-selected, student-planned, individually planned, activities in communications, as distinct from committee-planned and committee-imposed assignments” (13). He further states that

the permissive also denotes... an ‘atmosphere’ or classroom setting in which the instructor and the members of the class accept, and do not reject, each other at their current levels of achievement in the language arts. A two-way, or interpersonal, relationship prevails; all those concerned are taken where they are and as they are. All truly student-centered work in communications would have to begin at this point and work outward, as if along the radius of a series of concentric circles. (13)

This is, of course, a fundamental tenet of progressive education, minus the broader social concerns. It focuses on the student-centered aspects of progressive

educational philosophies, but does not focus on the goal of improving society or institutional structures. It is, therefore, a reduction of progressivism.

This dissertation will show that, when taken on the whole, these reductions circumscribed our abilities as teachers to effectively and ethically teach writing. Chapter I sketches Red Scare politics as it relates to rhetoric and writing instruction. Beginning with a narrative exploration of one historian's decision to sign a loyalty oath in the state of New York in 1934, it illustrates how Depression-era conflicts helped lay the groundwork for Cold War anticommunism. Faith in the "superior virtues of persuasion," as Becker called them, helped mediate the controversial line between reform and revolution in America. Kenneth Burke's early rhetorical theory serves as an engaging point of rhetorical contrast to Becker's position. In 1935, Kenneth Burke gave a speech to the Communist-led American Writers Congress that helps us more thoroughly understand Burke's influence on the field of composition and rhetoric.

Burke's speech serves as a departure point for discussing how liberal anticommunism helped create a middle ground between communist philosophy and the countersubversive forms of anticommunism that were already present before WWII. The belief in the "superior virtues of persuasion" placed rhetoric at the center of debates between liberal and conservative anticommunists. The emerging propaganda analysis movement played a central role in helping to shape the field of writing instruction during this time, and it, too, was tied to anticommunism, in that its purpose was to give citizens a means to filter out

fascist and communist propaganda. On a larger scale, it eventually helped fuel Red Scare politics.

It is interesting that these debates emerged at the same time that some scholars were trying to decide what to do with the first-year composition course. The chapter concludes with Herbert Weisinger's pre-war proposal for the first-year composition course. Weisinger argued that communist and fascist critiques of democracy could help students more fully understand what it means to live in a democracy. Because his proposal brings together issues of propaganda analysis, objectivism, anticommunism, and the meaning of a humanistic education, I conclude this chapter with a thorough investigation and description of his proposal.

Chapter II begins with Signi Faulk's proposal for first-year composition. Emerging after the war, Faulk's proposal contends that first-year composition could improve student writing at the same time that it promoted "international understanding." I then argue that this proposal would have enjoyed little success because of the specific pressures of Red Scare politics. Returning, then, to our discussion of Kenneth Burke, I outline his rhetorical projects as they relate to emerging Cold War conflicts. After WWII, academics were beginning to witness the first academic freedom cases of the Cold War period. The University of Washington case proves to be most significant not only because it was one of the earliest (1948), but because it was highly publicized and set the precedent for universities across the country. Most interesting, in terms of rhetorical analysis, is the role that objectivism played in these six academic freedom cases. Raymond

B. Allen, the university president, rationalized the firing of three tenured university professors who had been members of the CP during the thirties by “proving” that they had failed to live up to their duties as academics solely by being members of an organization that demanded unquestioning loyalty. A Toulmin analysis of Allen’s arguments explains how objectivism helped mediate the logical inconsistencies of his position.

The chapter branches out to an exploration of “Vital Center” liberalism, which had difficulties maintaining a balance between its commitment to civil liberties and its commitment to anticommunism. Then, from several composition historians, I glean descriptions of nineteen fifties classrooms and contextualize these descriptions in terms of previously discussed Cold War conflicts.

Authority, it turns out, gets redefined in the fifties classroom. Before the Cold War, knowledge had the potential to be obtained through an open, ongoing process. During the McCarthy era, students were taught to shape their thoughts and actions toward an already existing authority. In other words, scientific truth became a mask for authoritarian truth. Objectivism is precisely the mask that Raymond B. Allen wears in the academic freedom cases at the University of Washington.

Chapter III explores what we can discover from our journals and from textbooks about composition theory and practice in the early fifties. An analysis of two popular textbooks (McCrimmon and Brooks and Warren) illustrates the tension between empiricism and its reductive term objectivism, as well as humanism and its reductive term formalism. Generally speaking, however, we

can learn more about the field of composition and rhetoric during this time by looking at two of the major journals in the field of English (CCC and College English) and by the work of scholars who identified themselves as rhetoricians.

The “Workshop Reports of the 1950 Conference on College Composition and Communication” prove that the scholars who were engaged in the professional development of our field did not work from entirely current-traditional assumptions about language production. It also proves that early CCC work was involved in more than service related advice or composition lore, as North would put it. Teachers were, instead, actively engaged in developing a philosophy of first-year composition. This philosophy stood in opposition to the way that anticommunists viewed language production in the academy, but would have been impossible to implement fully into real composition classrooms because of the political climate.

Because many rhetorical scholars have analyzed McCarthy’s speeches, this study only highlights them for the sake of understanding how they relate to the role of knowledge production in the university. Taking a cue from Roger Gilles, I argue that the McCarthy era was no time for rhetorical scholars to celebrate sophism. Weaver’s conservative rhetoric was no doubt a response to McCarthyism. Kenneth Burke’s refinements of his own earlier rhetorical philosophy represent a liberal response. Both Burke and Weaver were key players in the early CCCC workshops. Burke outlined a philosophy of first-year composition at the first convention that has intriguing implications for our study as well.

In 1954, the year that McCarthy's would finally be censured by the Senate and denounced by many liberal and conservative citizens alike, the field of English finally addressed the problem of communism, anticommunism, and Red Scare politics. In February of this year, Harlen Adams, president of NCTE, addressed the council in Los Angeles and announce the council's "first full statements on a controversial social problem" contained in the pamphlet Censorship and Controversy. This chapter continues by describing how this pamphlet fell in line with Cold War epistemological assumptions (members of the Communist Party were unfit to teach, it argued), but also how it attempted to pull away from them. College English also responded this same year with a printed symposium titled "Controversial Materials in the Classroom." This series of articles proves that Red Scare politics had a discernable effect on the way that teachers taught first-year composition because roughly half of the responses to this symposium dealt with what materials could and should be used in the first-year composition classroom. This chapter describes these responses and analyzes them in terms of the epistemological assumptions they portray.

I conclude this project by investigating how these epistemological assumptions still affect the field of composition and rhetoric today. As more than an afterthought, I seek to find ways to resist the type of repression that Red Scare politics illustrates. I look for ways to resist the pressures of formalism and objectivism on our field, pressures that keep us from creating a contextually bound relationship between humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies. Finally, I build on the objectives that were presented at the second

Conference on College Composition and Communication and argue for a theory of composition based on a progressive vision of democracy. By combining the best elements of humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies, this vision stands directly against both the internal and external sources of repression that we, as composition teachers, face in our everyday teaching lives.

## I: Humanists, Progressives, and Objectivists Before the War

*“Anything may be true—the irrational quite as probably as the rational! So speaks the model of 1935” (54).*

--Austin Warren, reviewing Burke’s Permanence and Change

*“Thus, a profound cultural aversion to communism also underlay McCarthyism. It was this detestation that gave politicians broad leeway to pursue anti-Communist endeavors. A related factor was the nation’s underdeveloped appreciation of the importance of civil liberties for repudiated minorities. Public opinion polls gave evidence of the high threshold level of political intolerance in the 1930s—a time of rising international tension but long before the alarms of the Cold War.*

*Indeed, to understand the “ism,” the right which gave it birth, and the decade of the 1950s, we must first examine the 1930s, the energetic left of that decade, and its real and imagined legacies.” (10)*

--Richard M. Fried, from Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective

If we begin with the relatively safe assumption that the fifties were more conservative times than the thirties, we can say that *something* happened to writing instruction during the early Cold War period. Like the rest of American culture, we could argue, writing instruction took a more conservative turn. It is more difficult, however, to argue more precisely what happened or why. Keeping in mind that we want to prove that, within the realm of writing instruction, humanism, empiricism, and progressivism were reduced to formalism, objectivism, and permissiveness, we must first explain the ways that these reductive forces existed in our culture before the Cold War got underway.

As in the fifties, widely diverse political and social cultures conflicted with each other in the thirties. The two opening epigraphs to this chapter illustrate this conflict. While one model of thought led Austin Warren to write, “Anything may be true, the irrational as well as the rational!” and to attribute this

pluralism to the atmosphere of a decade, there was also, as Richard Fried makes clear, a whole atmosphere of public opinion that stood in direct opposition to this model of thought. As we will see later in this chapter, the thirties brought on more radicalism than our country had seen since its revolution, but institutional pressures kept the nation's politics from shifting very far left, even during the worst years of the Depression.

Regarding writing instruction, some of what we see happening in the early fifties is a response to the legacies of the thirties, but some of it is also a response to a practical need, given birth by a growing population of under-prepared students, for more effective teaching methods (Bartholomae 41). Later in this project, we will illustrate how both of these responses helped to shape the first meetings of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in the 1950s. We will see that the legacies of the thirties conflicted with the national agenda emerging in the early Cold War period and that the conference itself was brought about because composition and communication teachers needed more professional solidarity with each other as well as a more cohesive way of teaching a rapidly growing student population after WWII. From its very beginnings, the service-oriented reality of the first-year composition course conflicted with both the progressive and the humanist ideals held by many of its teachers.

Before we explicate these conflicts, however, we must first outline some of the major conflicts of the thirties as they relate to university epistemology. Generally speaking, the conflicts that are most relevant to Cold War writing instruction are between traditional humanism, a newly re-emergent progressivism,

and a consolidating empiricism. These conflicts did not simply emerge in the fifties. For example, many of the antiradical forces that we see arising in the early fifties—ones that we tend to attribute to “McCarthyism”—were already well in place during the thirties, long before McCarthy arrived on the political scene. Our understanding of writing instruction in the early fifties, therefore, requires that we outline:

1. America’s radical and antiradical traditions (including the progressive, the popular front, and anticommunist movements);
2. the mediating role that propaganda analysis and General Semantics played between those traditions;
3. how that mediation influenced writing instruction before WWII and helped to shape the communications and composition movements; and
4. how humanists in the field of English responded to the communication and composition movement.

While I do not want to over-idealize the thirties, they were more radical and experimental times, and this radicalism spilled over into writing instruction in very interesting—and effective—ways. While some classes were taught from what we would now call a current-traditional paradigm, Berlin contends that these theories were rivaled by 1) expressivist theories that celebrated the individual, and 2) “transactional approaches that emphasized the social nature of the human experience” (RR 58). While expressivist theories emerged from romanticist notions, transactional rhetoric emerged from progressive education, which “was an extension of political progressivism, the optimistic faith in the possibility that

all institutions could be reshaped to better serve society, making it healthier, more prosperous, and happier” (58). During the Depression, Berlin argues, “the social reformism that had been the main concern of progressives before [WWI] again became dominant” (60). Berlin is certainly correct when he argues that different epistemologies were in play during the 1930s, but what Berlin does not outline is the way that academics during the thirties were pressured toward the gradual acceptance of more centrist philosophies even during these more radical times. He also fails to show us a *particular* picture of the main academic debates of the thirties between humanism, empiricism, and progressivism. Because I hope to show how institutional pressures led academics toward conformity, I will begin with two particular cases: the case of Carl Becker, and the case of Kenneth Burke.

Carl Becker’s case centers on an essay he published after signing a loyalty oath in 1934, and Kenneth Burke’s centers on a speech he gave to the American Writers’ Conference in New York, 1935. Becker’s case, in some ways, was not at all unusual. In the mid-thirties, teachers were required to sign loyalty oaths in many parts of the country, but Becker’s case proves most relevant because his essay introduces some of the key ideas that emerged later in the early Cold War period. It also proves interesting to those of us in the field of writing instruction because of the particular function that rhetoric played in issues of institutional loyalty. Burke’s case also proves to be relevant to rhetoric studies, but for different reasons. Many cite Burke as someone who is “foundational” to our field. His talk to a Communist-led organization, and its members’ fundamental

rejection of his proposal, I contend, solidified the direction of his rhetorical theory. By analyzing this talk, and noting the places where his rhetorical theory intersects with the rhetorical implications of the Carl Becker case, we will get a better picture of the legacies of the thirties. This will, in turn, give us better ground for understanding the early Cold War period in the following chapters.

***Accepting the Consequences: Carl Becker and the Virtues of Persuasion***

In 1934, years before McCarthyism took hold, the historian Carl L. Becker signed an oath, drawn up by the State of New York, swearing his support for the Constitution of the United States. This oath, spawned by the radicalism that the Depression had brought to college campuses, was fairly vague. Although the question of whether or not one was a Communist was not explicitly part of the New York loyalty oath, the question was probably on many people's minds. The United States faced the greatest economic turmoil it had ever known. "For many," Richard M. Fried argues, "the Depression signaled the final collapse of capitalism that Marx had predicted" (10). Nevertheless, the majority of Americans vehemently opposed economic revolution. Sirgiovanni argues that for most of the twentieth century, "deep, often uncompromising hostility to domestic Communists and fellow travelers, coupled with dread and loathing for the Soviet Union, fairly describes the views of millions of Americans since the Russian Revolution of 1917" (1). Even during the Depression, many Americans believed that while economic reforms were needed, a revolution was far from a cure. Though the thirties were a time when government more directly involved itself in the economy, Americans were very sensitive about any type of plan that seemed

even socialist. The Communist Party, therefore, was no real threat in the early thirties. “Though conditions were ripe for radicalism,” Fried argues, “the early 1930s found the Communist Party (CP or CPUSA) weak and isolated” (11). This fact raises an interesting question: if the CP was so weak, and the majority of Americans wanted no part of revolution, then why were loyalty oaths necessary?

The answer lies in understanding the strength of America’s antiradical tradition, as well as understanding the more violent and chaotic aspects of some brands of radicalism in America. “Deeply rooted in America’s political and social culture,” Sirgiovanni argues, “[the antiradical tradition] involves an insistent, often exaggerated belief that vast internal conspiracies are afoot to undermine the American way of life, to deprive people of their liberties, and to supplant freedom with dictatorship in the United States” (15). Not only was this belief in conspiracies central to our own revolution against England, it continued throughout the eighteenth century with a fear that the more fundamentally class-based French Revolution would spread to America. It also fueled a deep distrust of Freemasonry, spawning the Anti-Mason movement. In the nineteenth century, this belief in conspiracies led to a deep distrust of the Irish and German Catholics who were immigrating into the country, to a determination to defeat the great “Papist menace.” Americans in the South believed that slaves were close to revolution and that Industrialists in the North were attempting to incite this violence. Industrialists in the North feared revolutions from exploited labor. The development of trade unions only increased this fear. (Sirgiovanni 16-20)

While it is true that antiradical fears are often exaggerated, there certainly have been cases where a violent radical fringe threatened the American way of life. As Allen F. Davis argues in his biography of Jane Addams: “Free Speech and radical ideas became more difficult... after the assassination of President McKinley by Leon Czolgosz, an avowed anarchist” (116). At the turn of the century, memories of the 1886 Haymarket Riot were still vivid enough that Chicago police “rounded up and arrested hundreds of people, most of them immigrants suspected of holding radical views” (117). Here, as is often the case, the collective response to this violent radical fringe repressed nonviolent people who ascribed to progressive, nonviolent ideals.

Collectively, then, we can say that Americans still held remnants of the type of fears that Sirgiovanni mentions through the twentieth century, and even greater fears about anarchism in the early twentieth century. The greatest antiradical fear of the mid-twentieth century, however, was the belief that communist forces were at work in America in an attempt to undermine democracy. “For most of the present century” Sirgiovanni argues,

Communism has been the *bete noire* of those Americans who have believed their country to be imperiled by enemies from within—and beyond. Members of the Communist Party have been subjected to unsparing criticism and official persecution, on the grounds that they are under secret orders from the U.S.S.R. to help overthrow the U.S. government. (15)

So by 1934, when Becker signed his oath (along with other teachers and professors in New York), many people perceived an internal communist threat, despite the CP's relative unpopularity, and despite some remorse on the part of the country as a whole about the first Red Scare. This was particularly true in New York, which had what Richard Fried calls the "longest tradition of antiradicalism" (104). Issues of how to ensure teacher and student loyalty had been debated in the legislature since 1919, but a loyalty statute had only been in effect once before in New York's history, and it only had a short life of two years before Governor Al Smith repealed it in the early twenties. But the early thirties saw the very worst of the Depression all across America: "By 1932 unemployment gripped almost one third of the workforce. As jobs were lost, home mortgages were foreclosed, and farms were taken, the Depression seeped upward, eroding the middle class and nibbling at the wealthy" (R. Fried 10). Strikes broke out across the country, resulting in deaths in Michigan and an outright attack on striking World War I Veterans in Washington, D.C.

When Roosevelt took office in March 1933, Edmund Wilson reported in the New Republic that people were eating out of garbage dumps in Chicago. Though Roosevelt pushed his New Deal vigorously on the nation, no one knew if his ideas would help the economy. Many people feared that, by getting the government so directly involved in the economic affairs of the nation, he was undermining the basic tenets of market capitalism. Despite the fact that the CP opposed Roosevelt and that most New Dealers "detested Communism," conservative critics called the New Deal policy "a blueprint for the bolshevization

of America” (Sirgiovanni 27). Roosevelt’s popularity did, of course, shift America’s politics to the left, at least for a short time, but even during Roosevelt’s prime, antiradical forces—particularly those that saw Roosevelt’s politics as too much like those of the Progressive Party—constantly pushed the nation’s economy and ideology back toward the center.

By the early thirties, college campuses, however, started to see progressivism reemerge. Jane Addams, who was nearing the end of her life and who had been surrounded by controversy all through the twenties, was to be “showered once more with honors, praised beyond reason, and treated, again, as a saint” (Allen Davis 282). The progressive emphasis on non-violence also reemerged. Ellen W. Schrecker argues:

the international tensions that accompanied the Depression and the rise of Hitler lent a real sense of urgency to the anti-war fervor that was sweeping the nation’s campuses. In a 1933 poll at Columbia University, 31 percent of the undergraduates declared themselves absolute pacifists and another 52 percent maintained that they would not fight unless the United States itself was invaded. At the same time, thousands of students all over the country signed the Oxford Pledge, a pacifist import from Great Britain that stated, “We pledge not to support the United States government in any war it may conduct.” (Schrecker 28)

While many had high ideals, the early thirties were a time of sacrifice for many, and the undergraduates, graduates and faculty members in the universities were not exceptions to this. Professors’ salaries were cut as much as fifteen percent.

Many were fired or reduced to lecturer status. Though the number of graduate students increased during the early thirties, many could not find jobs they could afford to take upon graduation (Schrecker 29). So 1934 was not a year when many professors could afford to take a principled stand against a loyalty oath. It is probable that the historian Carl Becker, and others like him, signed the oath to keep his job. After all, general wisdom suggests that we may have to give up some of our freedoms during politically difficult times.

Becker, who often wrote with great precision, was vague when writing about his decision to sign the oath. To him, it meant

nothing except this: that teachers in New York State are obliged to acknowledge in writing that they are obligated by the obligations imposed upon them by the duties they have assumed, and by the obligations imposed upon all citizens by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New York. (qtd. in Schrecker 69)

But a year later, in 1935, Becker published Everyman His Own Historian: Essays on History and Politics. One of the essays contained in this collection (“The Marxian Philosophy of History”) revealed that questions of communism were clearly on his mind. Written in the form of Socratic dialog between a liberal and a Communist, the essay attempts to prove

(1) that an intelligent person may regard Marxian philosophy of history as an illuminating interpretation of the past without subscribing to it as a law of history, and (2) that even if convinced that the Marxian doctrine is a

valid law of history, one might still with excellent reasons refuse to support the communist cause. (Becker 524)

The dialogue itself is fascinating, explaining how a historian can accept Marx's interpretation of the past without accepting his vision of the future. What may be most important about the dialogue, however, is that it attempts to define the differences between liberals and Communists. "I refuse to join the Communists," the liberal asserts, "because, while I sympathize with their desire to make a better world for the mass of the people, I have no faith in the methods which they propose for obtaining this object" (532). In other words, the liberal does not want revolution, nor does he want conditions to be ripe for revolution. These words had deep implications during the worst years of the Depression.

Furthermore, the liberal believes "that all the great and permanently valuable achievements of civilization have been won by the free play of intelligence in opposition to, or in spite of, the pressure of mass emotion and the effort of organized authority to enforce conformity in conduct and opinion" (532). The liberal always prefers the free play of intelligence to a dictatorship, "whether it be the dictatorship of a Stalin, a Mussolini, or a Hitler" (533). But the Communist argues that what appears to be a free society will resort to a dictatorship when "confronted by the rising power of the proletariat" (534). "What then," the Communist asks, "will become of freedom of speech and the appeal to persuasion? Since you sympathize with objectives of the Communists, will you not then be forced to join them? Why wait till then?" (534).

But when confronted with the possibility of joining a bourgeois dictatorship or a proletariat dictatorship, the liberal finally argues that there is a third solution. The conclusion to the dialogue is worth quoting in full:

Liberal: I might still refuse to join either side. I might persist in the futility of expressing my faith in the superior virtues of persuasion.

Communist: That would have serious consequences for you. You would be suppressed.

Liberal: True enough. But I might accept the consequences. I might choose to be suppressed rather than to support what I object to. In short, I might, as a last refuge from imbecility, become a Christian and practise the precept that it is better to suffer evil than to do it. (536)

This argument was important in the mid-thirties, given the social, political, and economic uncertainty of the time. It underscores the desire of many liberals to separate from more radical, revolutionary philosophies. Signing a loyalty oath, despite Becker's argument that the gesture did not mean much, clearly meant a great deal. Signing a loyalty oath was an affirmation that one would stand behind the Constitution, even to the point of suffering.

What Becker and other liberals like him could not have fully understood at the time was how important these gestures would become once the Cold War got under way, how the creation of liberal anticommunism would only help to fuel an atmosphere of distrust, and how that distrust would eventually shape the epistemological assumptions behind our university systems. The final effect had tremendous reverberations for those of us involved in the interdisciplinary field of

writing studies. This effect was particularly felt by the first-year writing course, one of the few courses required of all students, the course responsible for the intellectual orientation of the student and for introducing the student to the fundamentals of persuasion and effective writing.

What is most significant to us in the field of rhetoric and composition is the way that Becker ties his argument to the concept of persuasion. In his essay, he makes it explicit that the liberal has “faith in the superior virtues of persuasion.” He opposes the “free play of intelligence” to “the pressure of mass emotion and the effort of organized authority to enforce conformity in conduct and opinion” (532). This forced choice between faith in the virtues of persuasion and the pressure of mass emotion relates in several ways to our three epistemological terms.

First, it relates directly to the ways that humanists conceive dialectic. Through an individually motivated choice, Becker’s liberal chooses to suffer evil at the hands of organized authority rather than succumb to the pressures of mass emotion. This notion of subjectivity does not really allow for individuals to collectively stand up against organized authority, as it would in a more progressive epistemology. Under progressivism, one could argue: “I might choose to work together with my fellow men and women and in a communal attempt to change the world,” but this possibility does not exist in Becker’s schema. Second, it relates to objectivist epistemology because, as we will see in Chapter II, a great deal of Cold War epistemology relates to a type of subjectivity that has at its center an autonomous subject who is able to make objective

decisions without the influence of outside forces. Objectivist epistemology, by becoming an academic law instead of part of an empirical method, will have enormous implications because it will, ironically, help organized authority enforce conformity in the university setting. It will play a central role in reducing traditional humanism to formalism and progressive epistemology to a permissive method of teaching.

It is important to point out that this had not yet happened in the mid-thirties. One of the primary functions of rhetoric during this time was to give all subjects the ability to defend themselves against outside forces, whether they be communistic, anarchistic, or fascistic forces, or whether they be other types of negative forces like emotion. But during the thirties this belief was not necessarily an academic law, it was simply part of an emerging field called propaganda analysis. Harold Lasswell, if not the first then one of the first propaganda theorists, published an essay titled “Propaganda” in 1931. In it, he refined his 1927 Propaganda Technique in the World War to apply more specifically to the process of education.

In this essay, he defines propaganda as “the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations” (13). His work invites readers to reconceptualize the classical philosopher/sophist debate by separating the process of education from propaganda. “The inculcation of traditional value attitudes” he argues, “is generally called education, while the term propaganda is reserved for the spreading of subversive, debatable, or merely novel attitudes” (13). He also draws a distinction between deliberation, which “implies the

consideration of a problem without predisposition to promote any particular solution” (13) and propaganda, which is “concerned with eliciting such predispositions” (13). The stakes are much higher, however, in the modern age than they were in classical times. Propaganda, after all, calls into question issues of nationality and the state:

Propaganda thus assists in making a fiction of the national state and in fabricating new control areas that follow activity areas, intersecting old control areas in every direction. Thus propaganda on an international scale is one important medium for transmitting those pressures that are tending to burst the bonds of the traditional social order” (23).

Lasswell further contends that propagandists show “indifference to formal democracy” (24) because they believe that human beings “are often poor judges of their own interests, flitting from one alternative to the next without solid reason” (24).

While there is not space in this chapter to consider whether or not Lasswell believed that human beings were helpless against the effects of propaganda, we can say that by drawing a clear-cut distinction between education and propaganda, his terms parallel the forced choice in academia between the “free play of intelligence in opposition to, or in spite of, the pressure of mass emotion and the effort of organized authority to enforce conformity in conduct and opinion” (532) as defined by Becker. By creating an exclusive space for education, where faith in the superior virtues of persuasion resides, audience issues often get repressed. Though Lasswell does acknowledge that the

propagandist must consider the values of his or her audience, he seems to show less faith in the ability of audiences to evaluate the motive and purpose of the propagandist. While we can argue that he hoped to give his readers this ability by writing his essays, his arguments oftentimes seem fatalistic. Later in this chapter we will see how the overall effect of propaganda analysis, when coupled with the rapid change brought about by newly developing mass communication channels, oftentimes only fed an atmosphere of distrust in America. This distrust, in turn, led more left-leaning scholars to either fall into silence or more explicitly state a commitment to centrist politics in America, even if doing so turned out to contradict the principles of formal democracy.

***An Unapologetic Propagandist: Kenneth Burke in the Thick of Things***

Kenneth Burke's approach to the newly developing field of propaganda analysis contrasts sharply with Becker's case. In 1935, Burke did not take the bait that the political climate laid out for him concerning propaganda. In fact, in a speech he gave to the American Writers Congress titled "Revolutionary Symbolism in America," he radically alters the definition of propaganda by complicating Lasswell's binary between education and propaganda. Long before literacy theorists questioned the assumptions behind what we would now call "cultural literacy," Burke gives us a new lens through which to view traditional and subversive values. For Burke (as it is for Addams), all education is propaganda, but effective propaganda has to consider the needs and values of the audience it is trying to reach. As we will see, this understanding of propaganda offended communist intellectuals, who wanted to stand on a narrowly defined

revolutionary ground. They were not willing to sacrifice their objectivist position for what must have seemed like a practical need. A careful investigation of this speech will show that it was more than pragmatic. It invited a new conception of artistic persuasion, upsetting the binary between propaganda and education—and, by extension, rhetoric and poetics.

At first glance it appears that Burke's speech unapologetically calls for the use of propaganda by communist writers. To some degree, this is true. Burke contends that the CP is making a mistake by using "the worker" as a symbol to bring about social change in America. Burke proposes, instead, that Communists use the symbol of "the people" when trying to persuade Americans. "I should emphasize the fact," Burke writes,

that I consider this matter *purely from the standpoint of propaganda*. It may be that the needs of the propagandist are not wholly identical with the needs of the organizer. Insofar as a writer really is a propagandist, not merely writing work that will be applauded by his allies, convincing the already convinced, but actually moving forward like a pioneer into outlying areas of the public and bringing them the first favorable impressions of his doctrine, the nature of his trade may give rise to special symbolic requirements. Accordingly, it is the propaganda aspect of the symbol that I shall center upon—considering the symbol particularly as a device for spreading the areas of allegiance. (269, *italics his*)

Burke understands the function of propaganda analysis in the culture at large, but because he speaks to a group of communist writers, he knows that they will not

fear revolution. Ostensibly, a group of communist writers hopes that economic revolution is near.

Burke speaks directly to this hope, using Lasswell as a point of departure: “Lasswell holds that a revolutionary period is one in which the people drop their allegiance to one myth, or symbol, and shift to another in its place” (268). But Burke argues that it is more complicated than this, because

when a symbol is in the process of losing its vitality as a device for polarizing social cooperation, there are apt to be many rival symbols competing to take its place. A symbol probably loses its vitality when the kinds of cooperation it promotes—and with which its destiny is united—have ceased to be serviceable. The symbol of bourgeois nationalism is in such a state of decay today, for instance—hence the attempt of Communists to put the symbol of class in its place. (268)

Burke suggests here that the right moment has arrived to consider what symbols will be most likely to win in a competition between rival symbols. “In suggesting that ‘the people,’ rather than ‘the worker,’ rate highest in our hierarchy of symbols,” Burke says, “I suppose I am suggesting fundamentally that one cannot extend the doctrine of revolutionary thought among the lower middle class without using middle class values—just as the Church invariably converted pagans by making the local deities into saints” (269). Here, Burke makes no apologies for trying to extend the doctrine of revolutionary thought, but does acknowledge that revolutionary thought has to find its grounding in a local context, even if that grounding changes the nature of the thought itself, as it once

did with Christianity. This shows an acute awareness of how effective propaganda works, that is, how it works as the art of rhetoric.

Burke follows Lasswell's contention that the propagandist must consider the needs and values of his audience before launching a propaganda campaign. "The propagandist may pursue his task not only on the ordinary 'common sense' level," Lasswell contends, "but also on a level leading to the underlying emotional life of those whom he desires to influence" (19). For Burke, this is absolutely essential, for he notes that the working classes in America have very little desire to stay working class. Hence the need for what he calls "propaganda by inclusion," one that contains both the elements of the working class struggle and, in Burke's words, "the ideal incentive, the eventual state of unification that is expected to flow from within it" (272).

Burke's desire, however, leads him to add a second thesis to his argument, and this thesis radically alters the meaning of propaganda. His first thesis, that the symbol of "the people" is better than the symbol of "the worker" for the purposes of propaganda, gets complicated by his second,

that the imaginative writer seek to propagandize his cause by surrounding it with as full a cultural texture as he can manage, thus thinking of propaganda not as an over-simplified, literal, explicit writing of lawyer's briefs, but as a process of broadly and generally associating his political alignment with cultural awareness in the large. (273)

Burke hopes that his audience, even if it does not accept his first thesis, will accept his second one. While the first thesis looks at propaganda from a rhetorical standpoint, his second looks at it from a poetic standpoint.

As many historians have pointed out, his audience accepted neither his first thesis nor his second one. Many attacked him for his use of terms like symbolism and myth (275). Others compared him to Father Coughlin, General Douglass, even Hitler and Rosenberg for suggesting that “the people” be used as a symbol for communist propaganda.

According to Burke, Joseph Freeman, one of the leaders of the AWC, stood up after his speech and announced, “We have a traitor among us!” (cited by Lentricchia 22). Though there is no way to prove whether or not this happened, we know from the published version of the “Discussion of Burke’s Speech” that Freeman argues:

The symbol of the *people* came with the bourgeois revolution. The bourgeoisie demanded the abolition of class privileges. Therefore it had the following of all the people. Then it turned out that the people were divided into classes. The word people then became a reactionary slogan—not because of any philosophy of myths, but because it concealed the reality, the actual living antagonism between the social classes [...] If the proletariat can become a dangerous political myth in the hands of the reaction, how much more dangerous is the vague symbol of the people. We must not encourage such myths. We are not interested in the myth. We are interested in revealing the reality. (277)

Others point out in their responses to Burke that the term “the people” has been used for reactionary purposes in recent history. Father Coughlin and General Johnson had condemned recent strikes in California by saying that the workers were “holding up the people” (qtd. in Simons 276). Hitler and Rosenberg had apparently argued: “let us not talk any more about the workers, let us talk about the people” (qtd. in Simons 276). Others along with Freeman condemn Burke for talking about the working class in terms of myths and symbolism while the working class struggle takes place in reality.

For our purposes, it is worth noting that Freeman’s idea of “revealing the reality” was directly related to the Marxist reliance on empiricism. Clearly, writers and scholars like Freeman saw science as a way to divorce their theories from charges of being propagandistic, or being thought of as “mere rhetoric.” In the sense that they exiled rhetoric, these intellectuals worked with objectivist epistemological assumptions. This may help explain why they failed to fully engage Burke’s point. “I was not disappointed in the response I expected when bringing up this subject,” Burke rejoins,

But I wish that some one had discussed the issue from my point of attack, the problem of propaganda. I think we are all agreed that we are trying to defend a position in favor of the workers, that we are trying to enlist in the cause of the workers. There is no issue about that. The important thing is: how to make ourselves effective in this particular social structure? I am trying to point out that there is a first stage where the writer’s primary job

is to disarm people. First you knock at the door—and not until later will you become wholly precise.

The response of Burke's critics, in fact, proves that his overall concern was valid. The writers at the conference were interested in theories about class struggle, but when issues of how to implement those theories were introduced, they fell back into intellectual posturing over their objective methods. Burke's critics failed to engage the primary purpose behind his speech: how to most effectively propagandize to a larger audience. Burke was aware when he gave his speech, and so made it explicit, that his "suggestion bears the telltale stamp of [his] class, the petty bourgeoisie," (273) but this did not change his overall purpose, which was to give communist philosophy a wider audience than the already convinced.

Frank Lentricchia argues that what Burke's critics had the most trouble swallowing was the following idea:

that a revolutionary culture must situate itself firmly on the terrain of its capitalist antagonist, must not attempt a dramatic leap beyond capitalism in one explosive, rupturing moment of release, must work its way through capitalism's language of domination by working cunningly within, using, appropriating, even speaking through its key mechanisms of repression.

(Simons 284)

This was only part of the picture, though. Burke spoke, after all, not to journalists but to what we now would refer to as creative writers. His "implied bruising point," Lentricchia argues, "was that the proletarian novel was both a literary and a political indulgence: applauded by the already convinced, unread by the

working class, quietly alienating to the unconvinced...” (Simons 285-6). It is clear from his speech that Burke wanted literature to be social action, working cunningly within capitalist culture to change it from within.

This desire cannot fail to engage us in the field of writing instruction. In Rhetorics, Poetics and Cultures, Berlin argues that “social-epistemic rhetoric starts from Burke’s formulation (1966) of language as symbolic action, to be distinguished from the sheer motion of the material” (82). Social-epistemic thought did not begin with Burke in the mid-sixties. With Burke, it began early in his career, as evidenced by his desire to disrupt what Berlin so succinctly calls the rhetoric/poetic binary, not only in the field of English studies, but in the broader culture as well.<sup>8</sup> Burke wanted to reach a culture beyond the field of English, but he was, as he said in his response to his critics, “speaking technically before a group of literary experts” (279). This is why he was surprised at their anger at his using the term “myth” when referring to the working class. “A poet’s myths,” he says, “... are *real*, in the sense that they perform a necessary function. They so pattern the mind as to give it a grip upon reality” (279). In Burke’s early philosophy, rhetoric is not a superior virtue we should have faith in, as it is in Becker’s schema. It is, instead, a way to give communist intellectuals a stronger grip on the reality they hope to change. His explicit use of the term propaganda proves that he was not sheepish about using rhetoric as an outright attempt to

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<sup>8</sup> Social-epistemic rhetorical thought, as Susan Kates makes clear in her Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education: 1885-1937 did not begin with Burke, either. Her overview of the pedagogical practices of Mary Augusta Jordan, Hallie Quinn Brown, Josephine Colby, Helen Norton, and Louis Budenz proves that many progressive educators were the precise embodiment of social-epistemic rhetorical theory and pedagogical practice.

influence culture. Just as Jane Addams saw education as propaganda, Burke saw rhetoric as an art of propaganda.

While our two cases only give us a partial picture of the 30s, they should give us a sense of two rhetorical extremes. Becker's case illustrates a rhetorical space where intellectuals are either forced into silence, or if we take Becker as his word, where they can continue to express their "faith" in the free play of intelligence and the superior virtues of persuasion. Whichever interpretive slant we choose to take, this decision creates a space for intellectuals to remove themselves from active political and social engagement. Burke's case illustrates the opposite rhetorical stance. It invites academics to consider how all art—high or low—persuades, and to conceptualize this art for specific social ends.

These two extremes outline a fundamental question for teachers: if the first-year composition course is responsible for introducing students to the fundamentals of language and persuasion, to what theory of language and persuasion should the teacher introduce them? Should it be one that invites students to tighten their grips on reality and work toward social change, as it would be in progressive education? Should it be one that invites them to loosen their grips on social contingencies and enter the realm of reason as mediated through their individual subjectivities, as it would be with humanist education? Or might it be even more prudent to have students focus on more empirical measures altogether? While that is one of the central questions this dissertation hopes to answer, we can say at this juncture that Burke's case complicates this question by changing the nature and meaning of persuasion and propaganda.

Burke's philosophy expands propaganda to include a wider range of persuasive techniques—most significantly, inquiry. In order to see this, we will have to move beyond his speech.

In the “Preface to the First Edition of Counterstatement, (1931)” we discover that four years before Burke gave his speech to the AWC, Burke draws a distinction between inquiry and pamphleteering:

There is pamphleteering; there is inquiry. In so far as an age is bent, a writer established equilibrium by leaning (either as his age leans, or in the direction opposite to his age)—and this we might call “pamphleteering.” A writer will also desire to develop an equilibrium of his own, regardless of external resistances—and this we might call “inquiry.” His actual work will probably show an indeterminate wavering between the two positions; he himself will not be sure just when he is inquiring and when he is pamphleteering. And he may not be wholly satisfied by the thought of doing exclusively either. (vii)

Knowing that Burke foregrounds inquiry in his rhetoric, we can reread an important part of his speech with new eyes. “Much explicit propaganda must be done, but that is mainly the work of the pamphleteer and political organizer” (270). What then, is the goal of the imaginative writer if not to engage in inquiry?

In the purely imaginative field, the writer's best contribution to the revolutionary cause is *implicit*. If he shows a keen interest in every manifestation of our cultural development, and at the same time gives a clear indication as to where his sympathies lie, this seems to me the most

effective long-pull contribution to propaganda he can make. For he thus indirectly links his cause with the kinds of intellectual and emotional engrossment that are generally admired. (271)

This is fascinating because inquiry becomes not an end in itself, but a way of achieving the type of respect for an ideal that Burke knows will be needed in both the academic and the broader civic realm. This example helps explain why the writer may not be satisfied being either a pamphleteer or an inquirer, but would want to vacillate between the two extremes.

### ***History Requires that We Lean: What Led Some Academics to Take a Stand***

These two cases, while they give us only a partial picture, provide relevant insights into the cultural and academic conditions of the mid-thirties. By the time Becker published his essay, the rising threat of fascism called into question any argument that suggested faith in abstract virtues of persuasion was superior to political action. By 1935, some left-leaning scholars no longer saw the possibility of remaining in the realm of inquiry; some found it necessary to enter the more political realm of pamphleteering.

In 1935, while Hitler was rapidly strengthening Germany's military powers, and Stalin was forcibly industrializing the Soviet Union, Congress tried to protect America from another war by passing laws that would attempt to ensure America's neutrality. The U.S.S.R. responded to the desire on the part of some leftists for action by changing its course in its attempts to spread communism. While the Soviet Union did not "by any objective standard... pose much of a threat to the distant United States," there was, in 1935, an "abrupt change of

direction: henceforth,” the Comintern ordered, “all Communist parties were to de-emphasize the class struggle and seek ‘collective security’ with all antifascist forces against the growing Hitler menace” (Sirgiovanni 29). Ironically, the Comintern understood what communist writers in the United States failed to understand when listening to Burke’s speech: class struggle would always fail to engage Americans, who assume that class is not an issue in the land of opportunity. The Comintern’s shift toward establishing a Popular Front movement would have a much broader appeal to socialist-minded liberals. Richard Fried argues that the CP of this period enjoyed some success because “they embraced the democratic symbolism of the decade” (13) and that “the Party enticed intellectuals chiefly by its stalwart anti-fascism” (13). But he also notes that the Popular Front influence was not truly significant. “If American communism enjoyed its ‘heyday’ in the 1930s, this was only in comparison to its earlier—and subsequent—experiences” (31). It is important that we not forget this fact when we look at the effects of anticommunism on writing instruction. American academics who gravitated toward the Communist Party during the Popular Front period were not part of a significant threat to American culture or to democracy. In fact, most academics who identified with the CP during this period did so because they believed that fascism was a greater threat.

Schrecker writes more specifically about the slow process that many academics took to convert to communism during this time. She notes that some scholars who believed in Marxism did not join the CP, while others converted to competing socialist visions. During the Popular Front period there was a “critical

mass of radical students and teachers that made it easier for a politically concerned academic to transform his theoretical attachment to the left into an organizational one” (33). Some of the cases she cites suggest that joining the CP was akin to an “adolescent ritual, one that seemed to give entrée into the most attractive social cliques” (34), but most academics joined because they were concerned about “the spread of fascism and the subsequent failure of Western democracies to stand up against it” (35). The question, after all, was not whether it is better to suffer evil than to do it, which were the terms around which Carl Becker framed his argument. The question more likely on many academics’ minds was: “which totalitarian force is it better to align with, a fascist one or a communist one? Which is the lesser of the two evils?”

For Jewish intellectuals especially, it became unthinkable not to actively oppose fascism. Joining the Communist Party was a way to more actively oppose it at that time, though one could not have taken such a decision lightly. The Communist Party was, after all, a revolutionary organization. It did demand unquestioning loyalty on the part of its members. Nevertheless, some academics decided that they could no longer, as Becker’s liberal did, express faith in the superior virtues of persuasion.

This does not mean, however, that these academics tried to persuade their students to become radicals. Schrecker argues that the vast majority of professors during the thirties and forties kept their party memberships secret, inside and outside the classroom. They did not do this in order to indoctrinate students clandestinely. In fact, teachers made little to no attempts to proselytize in class.

Many professors did not deny that they taught their courses from their own political perspectives. “Taught,” Schrecker argues, “not indoctrinated. The distinction is important, for whatever the intellectual quality of the Marxism these teachers purveyed, they all struggled to present it in an unbiased way” (44).

While we cannot be sure in what ways these particular teachers avoided indoctrinating their students, we can say that the distinction between teaching and indoctrination will be at the heart of Cold War epistemological struggles. While we must wait until the conclusion of this work for a full discussion of this distinction, Schrecker’s point about teachers struggling to present their materials in unbiased ways illustrates that even the most radically minded teachers in the thirties felt compelled to be neutral in the classroom.

### ***Putting Something Across: Objectivist Theory Gains Ground***

In 1936, Roosevelt won re-election with a landslide victory, government became more a part of American life, and America passed two more neutrality acts, even though Roosevelt warned that if aggression kept proceeding America would be attacked. In university culture, objectivist theory started to gain a great deal of ground. We can see how by looking at the rhetorical theory of I.A. Richards, the broader cultural movement spearheaded by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis, and the composition theory of Hayakawa. Generally speaking, these objectivist theories coincided with a gradual increase in Red Scare related paranoia.

I.A. Richards published The Philosophy of Rhetoric, a collection of lectures he gave at Bryn Mawr, in 1936. Though these lectures do not specifically

mention pre-war arguments for neutrality, they prove relevant to our subject for several reasons. First, he begins by bemoaning the present state of rhetoric studies in America:

Today it is the dreariest and least profitable part of the waste that the unfortunate travel through in Freshman English! So low has Rhetoric sunk that we would do better to dismiss it to Limbo than to trouble ourselves with it—unless we can find reason for believing that it can become a study that will minister successfully to important needs. (3)

Apparently, Richards did not believe that first-year English was important enough to warrant further study on its own grounds, so he urged that rhetoric “should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies” (3).

Unlike Burke, who grounded his rhetoric in persuasion by way of identification, Richards grounded his rhetoric in semantics:

To account for understanding and misunderstanding, to study the efficiency of language and its conditions, we have to renounce, for a while, the view that words just have their meanings and that what a discourse does is to be explained as composition of these meanings—as a wall can be represented as a composition of its bricks. We have to shift the focus of our analysis and attempt a deeper and more minute grasp and try to take account of the structures of the smallest discussable units of meaning and the ways in which these vary as they are put with other units. Bricks, for all practical purposes, hardly mind what other things they are

put with. Meanings mind intensely—more indeed than any other sorts of things. (10)

Richards had the admirable goal of dispelling the idea that words can mean anything separate from their contexts. The idea he called the “Proper Meaning Substitution” was the primary cause of misunderstanding.

Though this aspect of his project is admirable, his project has objectivist implications because it attempts to suppress rhetoric. “Persuasion is only one among the aims of discourse,” Richards argues. “It poaches on the others—especially on that of exposition, which is concerned to state a view, not to persuade people to agree or to do anything more than examine it” (24). The belief that exposition is the highest form of discourse grew in popularity in this historical moment, both inside and outside of the academy.

In 1937 the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) published “How to Detect Propaganda.” This essay simplified Lasswell’s ideas about propaganda and introduced them into the public forum. The IPA defines propaganda as the “expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups with reference to predetermined ends” (518). Propaganda is different than “scientific analysis” because

the propagandist is trying to ‘put something across,’ good or bad, whereas the scientist is trying to discover truth and fact. Often the propagandist does not want careful scrutiny and criticism; he wants to bring about a specific action. Because the action may be socially beneficial or socially

harmful to millions of people, it is necessary to focus upon the propagandist and his activities the searchlight of scientific scrutiny.

Socially desirable propaganda will not suffer from such examination, but the opposite type will be detected and revealed for what it is. (518)

The essay then offers the reader seven common “propaganda devices” (which are actually logical fallacies) and argues that these fool us because “they appeal to our emotions rather than to our reason. They make us believe and do something we would not believe or do if we thought about it clearly” (519). As in Lasswell, we see a reduction of the rhetorical triangle to logos, and—in this case—a more intense devaluation of pathos. Pathos, in this schema, is not an appeal to the values and attitudes of a particular audience, but is emotion alone. Emotion is dangerous because it can persuade us. This is the reason Berlin can rightfully argue that the techniques of propaganda analysis are objectivist. By reducing pathos to emotion, they intentionally suppress the idea that an audience has diverse values. This reduction is a sophisticated technique. It allows a skilled analyzer to classify all information that does not conform to the status quo (an acceptable definition of reason), as either emotion or as even more pernicious outside forces, wafting the poisonous air of propaganda.

The IPA’s schema appealed to conservatives, but also many liberals as well. For conservatives, it helped maintain the status quo. For humanist liberals, it emphasized reason. Even more ironic, though, is the fact that the IPA’s schema essentially mirrors the position of the communist intellectuals who spoke against Burke. They too were saying, “We are scientists, not propagandists.” In addition

to these broad appeals, propaganda analysis appealed particularly to writing teachers because it gave them something specific to do in the classroom. The essay ends with an assignment for readers to start looking for the seven devices in newspapers. “A little practice with the daily newspapers in detecting these propaganda devices soon enables us to detect them elsewhere—in radio, news-reel, books, magazines, and in the expression of labor unions, business groups, churches, schools, political parties” (524). This practical activity matched up with an important component of American intellectual life at this time, for intellectual life in America at this point in history was often tied to the idea that America could and should separate itself from the world through the superior virtues of persuasion.

Whether utilized by the left, right, or center, propaganda analysis was a type of “rhetorical isolationism.” It allowed its practitioners to separate themselves from negative perceptions of rhetoric by disavowing socially undesirable aspects of propaganda. Of course, in the broader cultural realm, the right and the left disagreed about what types of propaganda were socially beneficial and what types were not. While the IPA argued that these disputes could be resolved by employing the “searchlight of scientific scrutiny,” politicians would discover later more politically motivated ways of detecting Communists. As we will see later in this project, the assumptions behind propaganda analysis helped to drive Red Scare politics, though—most ironically—reason fell entirely out of the picture: inquiry became inquisition.

Red Scare politics gained ground years before McCarthy arrived on the political scene. In 1938, the same year that Hitler moved into Austria, the House of Representatives created a Special Committee on Un-American Activities under “arch-conservative Martin Dies of Texas” (Albert Fried 16). What is most interesting about this committee is that, instead of addressing the question of fascism in America, it primarily pushed its partisan agenda under the guise of anticommunism. Sirgiovanni explains it best when he contends that:

Although the committee did accumulate some useful information on pro-Nazi elements in the United States, Chairman Martin Dies... turned HUAC into a forum for attacking the New Deal and the network of Communist spies and sympathizers who supposedly had infiltrated the government under FDR friendly aegis. But his ranking Republican colleague, J. Parnell Thomas of New Jersey, was just as extreme: He condemned the New Deal’s Federal Theatre and Writers Project for producing plays that were “sheer propaganda for Communism” (32).

Clearly, propaganda analysis was not only for academics; politicians used it as well, not for objective, scientific purposes, but in this case for a very specific political one: to return America to its pre-Depression, pre-New-Deal status.

Just because propaganda analysis was used for self-serving ends, however, does not mean that it was an entirely bad cultural phenomenon. It only means that propaganda analysis was sometimes used deceptively, as propaganda in its own right. The same line of reasoning can be used when thinking about the effects of propaganda analysis on the field of writing instruction. One of the most

influential developments for writing instruction before the war was the semantic theory of Hayakawa. By reading his text, Language in Action: A Guide to Accurate Thinking, through the broader cultural analysis we have developed so far, we can more fully understand how propaganda analysis affected writing instruction before and after the war.

In the mid-thirties, Berlin reports, Alfred Korzybski “was attempting to apply the techniques of scientific empiricism to the study of language” (93), and Hayakawa would apply Korzybski’s linguistic theories to English composition classes. In 1939, Hayakawa published Language In Action. Dealing directly with how words persuade us, it argues that semantics can help us understand how human beings react to words and how to keep ourselves from being manipulated by them. We are not only affected by the words we use but by our “unconscious assumptions about language” (xi). Hayakawa argues that most of our assumptions about language have not been exposed to “scientific influence” and are, therefore, “naïve, superstitious, or primitive” (xii). His book hopes to do the following:

... to present certain principles of interpretation, or semantic principles, which are intended to act as a kind of intellectual air-purifying and air-conditioning system to prevent the poisons of verbal superstition, primitive linguistic assumptions, and the more pernicious forms of propaganda from entering our systems. (xii)

The book also argues that the political climate of the time requires more scientific measures because we now live in an environment “shaped and partially created by

hitherto unparalleled semantic influences: commercialized newspapers, commercialized radio programs, ‘public relations counsels,’ and the propaganda techniques of nationalistic madmen” (xii). This argument for the use of more scientific measures is, of course, extremely rhetorical, even though it claims to be scientific and therefore devoid of rhetoric altogether.

Hayakawa’s metaphor of poisonous air suppresses the importance of ethos in rhetoric, contending that subjects have no other way to analyze the source of arguments without the use of science. This places Hayakawa within the objectivist camp, but some aspects of Hayakawa’s philosophy are fuller (*i.e.*, more empirical, in our terminology) than Berlin and others give him credit for being. Hayakawa is interested in showing “language in action” (7). Like Richards, he rails against the idea that “we often talk about ‘choosing the right words to express our thoughts,’ as if thinking were a process entirely independent of the words we think in” (7). Hayakawa also hopes to bring about the use of science to improve our understanding of the way language works in process, the ways that “language makes progress possible” (13). In addition to this, he sees language as a means of inquiry: “If a person is worried about ethics, he is not dependent merely upon the pastor of Elm Street Baptist Church, but he may go to Confucius, Aristotle, Jesus, Spinoza, and many others whose reflections on ethical problems are on record” (14).

Despite these constructivist leanings, though, Hayakawa distrusts rhetoric, in some places implicitly (he refers to oral cultures for instance as “backward cultures” (13)), but in most cases explicitly. Take, for example, the way that he

opposes the “verbal world” with the “extensional world:” “Let us call this world that comes to us through words the verbal world, as opposed to the world we know or are capable of knowing through our own experience, which we shall call the *extensional world*” (16). The verbal world stands in relation to the extensional world “as a map does to the territory it is supposed to represent” (16). “If a child,” he goes on to explain,

grows to adulthood with a verbal world in his head which corresponds fairly closely to the extensional world that he finds around him in his widening experience, he is in relatively small danger of being shocked or hurt by what he finds, because his verbal world has told him what, more or less, to expect. He is prepared for life. (16)

According to this theory, if the verbal maps do not correspond to the extensional world, the child could wind up in a madhouse. Rhetoric, in this formula, gets equated with false reports. “By means of imaginary or false reports, or by false inferences from good reports, or by mere rhetorical exercises,” he argues, “we can manufacture at will, with language, ‘maps’ which have no reference to the extensional world” (17). General Semantics promises to reduce the potential harm of rhetoric, and—ironically—the potential harm of education:

Indeed, many are worse off than the uneducated, because while the uneducated often realize their own limitations, the educated are in a position to refuse to admit their ignorance and conceal their limitations from themselves by their skill at word-juggling. After all, education as it

is still understood in many circles is principally a matter of learning facility in the manipulation of words. (17)

This concept of word-manipulation will become very important after the war, as several scholars will speak out against its use when writing about the first-year composition course, but it was a concern for other scholars who wrote before the war, as we will see later in this chapter when we look at Herbert Weisinger's pre-war composition proposal.

What is important at this juncture is that Hayakawa argues: "At its highest development, the language of reports is known as science" and "by 'highest development' we mean greatest general usefulness" (31). From this, Hayakawa presents writing exercises that are explicitly designed for "the exclusion of judgments" and "the exclusion of inferences." Of course, these exclusions are good things for students to learn to do, especially when students understand that these exclusions fulfill a particular discourse convention. If these exclusions—combined with the assertion that "judgments stop thought" (38)—become the highest form of writing development, however, then humanists and progressives both lose out: writing instruction gets divorced from ethics altogether. There is no room, in Hayakawa's objectivist epistemology, for rhetoric to become a means of coming to judgments.

### ***Losing Ground: The Fragmentation of the American Left***

At the same time that objectivism gained ground in the realm of writing instruction, progressives lost ground in the broader political realm. In a letter to Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley argued that the greatest blow to the American

left was Stalin's decision to sign the Nazi-Soviet pact in August, 1939. Historians tend to agree. Sirgiovanni reports that the anticommunist forces grew stronger in the brief period before America joined the war and aligned itself with the Soviets (24), and Sidney Hook, who was "once a Communist or fellow traveler himself" (Albert Fried 51), became a major spokesman for the left, urging liberals to rid themselves of any communist leanings. Schrecker explains that "as early as 1939 [Sidney Hook] had warned the academic world to cleanse itself of Communists or risk 'playing into the hands of a native reaction which would like to wipe out all liberal dissent'" (105). This argument was not without merit. Communists had, after all, aligned themselves with Hitler, a move that seriously undermined the Communist Party in America. Earl Browder, the head of CPUSA had "recently assured followers that there was less chance of this occurring than of his being elected president of the US Chamber of Commerce" (Sirgiovanni 33). The Hitler-Stalin pact ended the Popular Front, and gave more credence to anticommunist liberals.

There is some evidence that teachers in the field of English responded to the changing political landscape. For example, the purpose of literature in a democracy was questioned in a 1939 MLA document, "Statement of the Committee of Twenty-Four." Mara Holt argues that individualism won out over collective thinking in this document because collective thinking began to be associated with the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939. The writers of this document saw great danger in focusing on social values:

The individual, thus submerged in the social mass, is merely a cipher, a helpless unit whose thought, feeling, and action are determined by impersonal forces over which he has little or no control... Whatever the errors of rugged individualism in the economic sphere, the concept of political democracy assumes the efficacy of rugged individualism on the plane of the spirit. (qtd. by Holt, 544)

In the field of English then, we can see that some scholars responded to the political atmosphere at the time by reinforcing a rugged individualist brand of humanism in the American academy. Whether or not this was a concerted effort on the part of English departments to divorce themselves from progressive politics, we definitely know that these writers wanted to divorce their field from the social emphasis that was central to progressive education. Berlin implies that “The Statement of the Committee of Twenty Four” sets the groundwork for literature programs to be “seen as serving the individual and acting as a safeguard against collectivist notions that might threaten the ideal of ‘rugged individualism on the plane of the spirit’ and finally, on the plane of politics” (RR 111). Any political environment that would allow literature to serve in this function only threatens to marginalize the more practical and socially based composition course.

Although rhetoric and composition functioned, usually separately in many institutions, the field of composition and rhetoric was not yet defined.

Nevertheless, these tensions between humanist and progressive epistemologies certainly affected first-year composition pedagogy during this time. Many humanists within English departments argued that composition courses were

unnecessary, and few humanists were excited about teaching them. Oscar James Campbell, one of the members of the Committee of Twenty-four, argued that the first-year composition course should be abolished, and his argument reveals many elitist assumptions about the function of the university and university English.<sup>9</sup>

While it may be true that some humanists did not want to teach the course because it was based in practicality—an offense to the elitist sensibilities of a humanism based in *belles lettres* instead of rhetoric—I contend that other humanists may have solely been reacting against what first-year composition becomes when the political atmosphere makes it imprudent to bring debatable topics—topics that require judgment—into the classroom. In other words, these humanists were responding against composition as it was conceptualized under the reduction of humanism to formalism.

The calls for the abolition of the composition course would fail, in part, because the diversity of students increased and there was a strong push for general education requirements before World War II. Berlin argues that this push was a “response to the Depression and the threats to democracy posed by fascism from abroad...” (RR 92). Our analysis of Hayakawa makes it clear how the composition course fit into our national agenda at this time. In addition, the broader communications movement, of which the composition course was often seen as a part, fit this need as well. As Russell asserts, “the communications movement was interested in discerning how ‘good communication may differ from bad’—questions that Hitler’s propaganda machine had dramatically brought

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<sup>9</sup> See Russell’s “Romantics on Writing” and Crowley’s Composition in the University.

to the nation's attention" (CH 258). Russell explains that "As America drew closer to World War II, the treatment of critical thinking in content learning took a backseat to the more pressing issue of its importance in understanding threats to democracy, such as propaganda..." (258). Generally speaking, therefore, the early composition and communication movement drew some of its power from this national need. The field of General Semantics, and Hayakawa's appropriation of that field, allowed the composition course to define itself in a realm separate from the literature course, which drew more on humanistic values than empirical ones.

Paradoxically, however, the course also was circumscribed by its reliance on this national need. By aligning itself so closely to the national agenda, the composition course limited itself to the exclusion of judgments in classroom writing, leaving it with little but the scientific value of reporting. Because of the political atmosphere at the time, the progressive and the traditional humanist belief that students can learn more effectively by engaging political topics in the classroom was a less viable position for teachers to take up. This made the course less interesting to teach for most in the field of English studies, which only strengthened scholars' resistance to teaching the introductory composition course.

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the dilemma that most first-year composition teachers found themselves in at this time. The world was rapidly changing and the country was drawing closer to entering another world war. Speaking generally, humanist teachers wanted to pass on a love for great literature; some were beginning to do this through a reliance on the New Critical method, thereby focusing more on formalism. Progressive teachers wanted to

empower students to help create a better world and better institutions by working in dialog with student interest and concerns; some were focusing only on the progressive method, thereby focusing on the permissive. In both cases, the political atmosphere seemed to be in conflict with the broader desires of humanists and progressives, asking instead for an emphasis on reporting objective ideas clearly and meaningfully, and on analyzing subversive materials—two skills that would keep the world safe for democracy.

Humanists, however, had a safer perspective from which to argue for their desires than progressives in this political climate. At the beginning of the 40s, things were getting much worse for CP members in American culture, and progressive ideas were often conflated with communist thought during this time. In 1940, the 76<sup>th</sup> Congress passed Public Law 670, which would later be known as the Smith Act. This law gave the federal government “sweeping and undefined authority to go after groups it deemed subversive” (A. Fried 15). The Smith Act made it “unlawful for any person--

- (1) to knowingly or willfully advocate, abet, advise, or teach the duty, necessity, desirability, or propriety of overthrowing or destroying any government in the United States by force or violence, or by the assassination of any officer of any such government;
- (2) with the intent to cause the overthrow or destruction of any government in the United States, to print, publish, edit, issue, circulate, sell, distribute, or publicly display any written or printed matter advocating, advising, or teaching the duty, necessity, desirability, or

propriety of overthrowing or destroying any government in the United States by force or violence;

- (3) to organize or help to organize any society, group, or assembly of persons who teach, advocate, or encourage the overthrow or destruction of any government in the United States by force or violence; or to be or become a member of, or affiliate with, any such society, group, or assembly of persons, knowing the purposes thereof.
- (qtd. in Albert Fried 15)

With the passing of the Smith Act, we witness a transformation from mere propaganda analysis to concerted action against propaganda. America had not yet gone to war, but in its own isolation, it had attempted to keep enemies out by defending its ideological territory with law. This act would become the basis for the anticommunist witch hunting that would follow the war, so it is worthwhile to consider a few of the questions that this act would have raised for teachers at the time.

While no academics were jailed before the war for teaching subversive materials, the teaching clause that was in the Smith Act would have been very intimidating. Indeed, if such a law were in effect today, many would wonder if they could go to jail for introducing Marx, for instance, in the classroom. “In 1941,” Richard Fried reports, the Smith Act “enabled the government to jail eighteen Trotskyists for the high crime of being Trotskyists” (15). How would academics know whether or not they were next? How does one define the terms “advocating,” “abetting,” “advising,” or “teaching” revolutionary materials?

Could the introduction of Marxist materials in the classroom be construed as teaching the “duty, necessity, desirability, or propriety of overthrowing the American government,” even if the purpose of introducing these documents would be to critique Marxism? Would publishers of the Communist Manifesto be the next group to become liable under this law? To have these types of questions raised at the same time that many universities were making the first-year composition course a requirement undoubtedly affected the teachers of the course and the direction that the course would take in its future.

***Considering the Times: A Remarkable Proposal***

In the age of the Smith Act, few people publicly raised the possibility of introducing controversial materials into the classroom, the kind of materials that could have engaged student lives and taught them the principles of argument. That is why Herbert Weisinger’s proposal in College English, in 1941, is such an exemplary case. He responded to critiques of the first-year composition course with a radical proposal for its time.

Weisinger was already at the University of Michigan in 1941 when he published “A Subject for Freshman Composition” in College English. An optimistic proposal, it gives the teachers of required composition courses a way of fulfilling the needs of the course, as well as the intellectual interests of the teachers and of the students alike. Weisinger’s article begins by reflecting on the uncertainty that some teachers feel when trying to put together material for the composition course. “As soon as the teacher of composition tries to collect suitable materials for his course,” Weisinger writes,

he discovers that English composition has no subject matter. Whatever the subjects of discussion he chooses, he is informed that he is poaching on the preserves of the economics teacher or political science teacher or science teacher. In desperation, he finally devises a curriculum which has a little of everything and consequently nothing of anything. (688)

This concern can still be found amongst composition teachers today.

Weisinger's response is interesting because he turns to the notion of "clear thinking," a goal often associated with objectivist teaching, in order to argue that the teacher of composition ought to be able to draw on materials from all fields of study in the composition course. "If the principle that good writing is the result of clear thinking is to be at all realized," Weisinger argues, "the teacher of composition must assert his right to draw on whatever materials he needs, regardless of the fields of specialization he must treat..." (688). In this case, Weisinger uses the eighteenth-century idea of perspicuity—"good writing is the result of clear thinking"—to bring political material into the classroom.

This political use of the concept of objective rhetoric underscores Berlin's argument that epistemologies often worked at cross-purposes during this time. To Berlin, objectivist theories of "rhetoric make the patterns of arrangement and superficial correctness the main ends of writing instruction" (RR 9), yet, throughout his essay, Weisinger uses objectivist approaches for a different end. He argues that a composition teacher "has the right to consider in his classes not the technical information and the specific techniques of investigation of the several fields of study but their general significance in terms of human needs and

aspirations” (688). He moves us into the realm of emotions (needs) and ethics (aspirations), which are of primary importance to Berlin’s transactional theories of rhetoric (*i.e.*, precursors to social-epistemic theories of rhetoric). In this case, the teacher of composition is directly involved in assessing and teaching students to assess the form, content and methods of the fields they will eventually enter. “While the teacher of composition is not a scientist,” Weisinger argues, “he can consider the problem of scientific method; while not a historian, he can trace the development of significant ideas; while not a political economist, he can discuss the merits of competing governmental forms” (688-89). This vision of composition gives the teacher a very broad range of materials, setting the criteria for what enters the composition classroom as that which “will be most useful to the student in enabling him to arrive at some understanding of the world in which he lives” (689). He ties this vision of the composition course specifically to “the task of the larger intellectual orientation of the first-year student,” (689) and then proposes that the composition course be structured around a “theory of democracy” (689).

Of course the idea of connecting writing courses to democracy was not new. Berlin argues that in the early nineteen hundreds there had been transactional rhetoric courses that had the specific goal of preparing students to live in a democracy. “This rhetoric was the most complete embodiment of John Dewey’s notion of progressive education, reflecting his conviction that the aim of all education is to combine self-development, social harmony, and economic integration” (47). But a closer investigation of Weisinger’s course proves that

this is a new type of democratic rhetoric.

This could easily have been because 1941 was a highly politically charged year in the United States. It reflected a political situation that Americans had never found themselves in before. Weisinger's article was published in April, so Russia was not yet, but only a few months away from being, an ally in WWII. The U.S. had not yet extended its Lend-Lease program to Joseph Stalin, but it was unofficially involved in a war with Germany in the north Atlantic. The citizens of the U.S. were, by this time, generally behind FDR's plan of action for involving America more directly in a worldwide defense of democracy. So the overall end of Weisinger's proposal, we can assume, would have met with approval during this time.

We can also assume that his means would have fallen in line with generally accepted teaching methods. The first section of the course is empirical in nature. It involves studying "the pitfalls of language," "the pitfalls of thinking," and "the perversion of language and thinking" that had been discovered by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis. It also relies heavily on the traditional formalist modes: exposition, description, argumentation, and narration. The course contains a unit on defining democracy, a unit of description—"what has happened to democracy," a unit of analysis (or exposition)—"why has this happened"; and a unit of evaluation—"proposals for the revivication of the concept of democracy" (690). What becomes fascinating here is that through the idea of reviving democracy, Weisinger effectively blends elements of General Semantics (objectivism), and current-traditional rhetoric (or more particularly

formalism through the use of the modes), with the overall social goal of transactional rhetoric for democracy. This blending, I contend, takes formalism back into the realm of humanism, and objectivism back into the realm of empiricism. Weisinger also defines democracy in a way that would have been appealing to both humanists and progressives at the time. He optimistically asserts that students will most likely come up with definitions of democracy that include the following things:

Belief in the right of all members of society to security and work; belief in equality of economic, cultural, and social opportunities for all members of society; belief in equal interest, responsible participation, and control by all members of society in the process of government; belief in the use and efficacy of reason and science in coping with the problems facing society; belief in the idea of the brotherhood of nations and permanent world-wide peace; belief in the dignity of the individual as a human being. (690)

Even more interesting is the fourth unit of analysis, “Why democracy has failed to live up to its expectations.” Weisinger contends that readings for this unit “ought to be from the chief contemporary antagonists of bourgeois democracy, namely, fascism and communism. The fascist materials ought to include the attack on capitalist economic organization and its dependent institutions” (691). This reflects faith, on Weisinger’s part, not only in democracy, but also in the ability of students to appreciate and come to a stronger and deeper belief in the power of democracy.

But he does not forget that there will be members of his audience who believe (or will have to deal with those who believe) that this is beyond the realm of where an English teacher should be traveling: “Perhaps it will be suggested that [the composition teacher’s] job is to teach sentences, paragraphs, and organization” (693). He does not argue against this point. Instead he concedes this point by stating

exactly, but how is it possible to teach the writing of sentences which say precisely what they are intended to say, paragraphs which develop a point cogently and economically, and papers which argue a proposition through logically without considering the thinking of which the papers are but the expression? In short, the writing is the thinking. (693)

While this would appear to be an objectivist theory of writing instruction, when we look more carefully at this quote in context we see that he simply turns an objectivist theory of writing instruction on its head. Most interestingly, he does so for a very particular political purpose: “I should like to recommend a shift from the accumulation of facts for their own sake to the humanistic interpretation of those facts” (693). While those of us in the field of composition and rhetoric will most likely feel uncomfortable with an unqualified use of the term humanism, the impulse behind Weisinger’s recommendation—getting students to interrogate the concept of democracy in order to create a more fully democratic culture—is profound. That Weisinger was able to propose this by blending objectivist philosophy and with the goals of transactional rhetoric may mean that this proposal gives us new ground for early composition theory.

Of course, Berlin is also right, though he never mentions Weisinger's proposal, when he argues that courses like these could work at cross purposes. Weisinger quips that his course is "barely disguised propaganda for democracy" (693). One wonders how much ground toward social change could be made in a course that was structured the way his was. Its emphasis on the modes limits students to definitions and proposals for the revivication of a concept, not toward specific actions. Nevertheless, Weisinger rails against the idea that

the function of a university is to find, record, and transmit information to students without in any way giving them a clue as to how to synthesize that information into a useful and fruitful method of gaining further knowledge and of applying that knowledge to the problems with which they as citizens come in contact. The modern university assumes that if enough facts are thrown at enough students over a long-enough period of time, they will receive an education. But, as I have tried to show, facts in themselves are of no significance unless they can be brought together into the making of positive attitudes and beliefs, and for this task the university refuses to take any responsibility. (693-694)

In this quote, we see Weisinger identifying himself with the progressive goal of reforming institutional structures through his teaching. This blending and bending of categories exemplifies a contextually bound relationship between humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies.

Proposals like this could have had enormous potential in the field of composition and rhetoric had it not been for the stifling fears of Red Scare politics

in the early Cold War era. Some social change, even if marginal, could have been brought about had not rhetoric and composition programs across the country been stifled by Red Scare politics. Our struggles with the Soviet Union could have helped us more fully interrogate the meaning of democracy in our writing classrooms, and this interrogation could have improved our students' conceptions of democracy at the same time that it improved their writing. Once Red Scare politics were fully underway, however, this potential was suppressed.

Weisinger believed that academic process could only bring students to a fuller conception of democracy if it contained the specific agenda of interrogating and more fully defining the construct of democracy. He did not believe in a strict objectivism, as we will see that "McCarthy's academic henchmen" (a term I borrow from McCumber) did. He wanted academics to deal with controversial questions in an ethical way, and to bring into question the methods of scientists.

In his proposal, Weisinger argues that:

When modern liberalism first began to assert its claims it had to remove the process of searching for truth from the hands of an ecclesiastical totalitarianism and so raised the slogan of pure science. But what was intended was the secularization of knowledge only and not the divorce of science from society; indeed, the seventeenth-century English scientists exerted all their efforts to follow the Baconian dictum to produce fruit, that is, knowledge useful for the advancement of mankind. What has happened is that the modern university has taken over the slogan but has forgotten the circumstances under which the slogan was raised. (694)

Weisinger did not know, and could not have known in 1941, how much greater the divide between “the slogan and the circumstance under which the slogan was raised” would become. He could not have known what disastrous effects this divide would later create, but his conclusion seems remarkably apt considering the damage that would follow. The university, Weisinger argues,

has traded honesty for respectability, truth for expediency, the world as it ought to be for the world as it is. For the university must never compromise with the world; what it believes in, because it has come to those beliefs as a result of the most rigorous and honest thinking it is capable of doing, it must stick by regardless of what others, whatever their position and power, may think. (695)

Before the war, a scholar optimistically reoriented the ground of the first-year composition course, overturning apolitical assumptions about epistemology by combining the best of humanist, empirical, and progressive epistemologies. He proposed a course that would have been interesting to teach, and which had the potential to change the way our students think about democracy. He proposed such a course because he believed that scholarship could stand up against power. This was, of course, before we entered WWII, before we knew about the Holocaust, before the atomic bomb, and before Hiroshima. Proposals like his would finally reemerge, years later, but this faith in scholarship would be irrevocably altered, challenged by the questions of a newer, less certain, age.

## II: Humanists, Empiricists, and Progressives After the War

*“It is the magician’s bargain: give up our souls, get power in return. But once our souls, that is, our selves, have been given up, the power thus conferred will not belong to us. We shall in fact be the slaves and puppets of that to which we have given our souls”*

--from C.S. Lewis’s The Abolition of Man, 1947

*“...for it is but a step from treating inanimate nature as mere “things” to treating animals, and then enemy peoples, as mere things. But they are not mere things, they are persons—and in the systematic denial of what one knows in his heart to be the truth, there is a perverse principle that can generate much anguish”*

--from Kenneth Burke’s Rhetoric of Motives, 1950

Before America entered the war, Weisinger’s proposal explored the possibilities of using what we would eventually call Cold War conflicts in the first-year composition classroom. Unapologetically democratic, his proposal argues that “the university in a democracy should teach the meaning of democracy” (695). “But this is not propaganda,” he insists, “for democracy is the only philosophy which dares include in it the use of scientific method, which alone, of all methods of inquiry, is capable of self-examination” (695). As we saw in the last chapter, Weisinger believed that the humanities could bring about a better understanding of the role of science in a democracy, but as the quotation above makes clear, he also believed that the self-examination inherent in empiricism was essential to democracy. This optimistic stance was proposed before Hiroshima, before the destructive potential of science would fully sink into the consciousness of the American academic mind. Few scholars after Hiroshima would suggest that the self-examination inherent in the scientific method would be enough to keep political power in check.

Generally speaking, the Cold War tension that most affected writing instruction centered on the reduction of empirical epistemology to objectivist epistemology. As we will see, administrators used the power of objectivist discourse to protect universities from the potential encroachments of politicians. As objectivist epistemologies gained power, academics within the university appropriated objectivist discourses for their own purposes. Political authority overlapped scientific authority, further removing it from the realm of ethics. In order to understand how objectivist epistemology affected writing instruction, we must, in this chapter, do the following:

- 1) Show how objectivist epistemologies helped protect universities from the Cold War political climate.
- 2) Examine the ways in which humanism responded to these objectivist pressures with formalist theory.
- 3) Illustrate how the left responded to this changing political climate by disassociating itself from progressive politics.

With these goals accomplished, we will be able to see, in a general way, how these responses affected writing instruction.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the growing awareness that unbridled scientific inquiry had destructive potential, science continued to play an important role in the shaping of our field in the early Cold War period. In fact, it became the paradigm that composition studies would eventually shape itself around in the Cold War period. Science also played a role in shaping popular culture after the war. Despite

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<sup>10</sup> The next chapter will be dedicated the specific ways these responses affected writing instruction.

Hiroshima, most Americans trusted science. According to one poll, 75% of Americans supported Truman's decision to use nuclear force (Diggins 51). Many also felt that the bomb saved us from having to invade Japan, and, as Cold War conflicts emerged, many felt that it saved us from having to go to war with the Soviet Union. There were humanists, however, who hoped post-war conflicts could be resolved through better communication and through better cultural understanding. There is evidence that this hope existed in the field of writing instruction.

In January 1947, Signi Falk published "International Understanding: An Experiment in Freshman English" in College English. From Faulk's perspective, the war had helped us see that "now more than ever the world is very much with us, and more than ever have we the need for a greater understanding and a greater knowledge of other peoples, other ways of living, and ways of thinking different from ours" (196). Like Weisinger, Faulk felt that the first-year composition course could "lay the groundwork for a more active world citizenship" (196), but Faulk's assumptions were different than Weisinger's.

Weisinger's proposal argues that students need to understand other types of governments so that they will be immune to other ideologies. By understanding criticisms of democracy, students can more fully define and even improve the existing state of democracy. Faulk's proposal, on the other hand, assumes that students need to be citizens of the world by obtaining "knowledge of other countries and other peoples, the kinds of work they do and their chances for making a decent living, how they worship and how they play, and something of

their lives expressed in the best of their recent writers” (196). In this way, Faulk’s proposal is a precursor to the types of multicultural theories of composition we see today. Faulk comments on the interdisciplinary nature of the first-year composition course and its potential for drawing on world history, human geography and world literature in order to establish more active citizenship on the part of students. Under Faulk’s plan, students in composition would study works about China, India, Russia, Africa, and Latin America, covering areas as broad as history, art history, economic theory, education, and anthropology—in addition to fiction and poetry.

This rather large body of material gets limited, Faulk argues, by the teacher’s focus on the “service nature” of the course: “To help students learn how to study, particular attention is given to material which requires them to take notes, to outline, to make summaries, and to write” (197). There is less specificity in Faulk’s proposal about how to focus on writing than there is in Weisinger’s. Faulk’s proposal, nevertheless, is engaging. As early composition theory, it suggests that the first-year composition course is responsible for the intellectual orientation of the student, not just a skills or a *belles lettres* course alone. But this proves to be the last time in the early Cold War period that any writer in College English, CCC, or PMLA looks this optimistically at the possibility of learning about Russian culture.

At the time, “international understanding” did not seem like an unreasonable suggestion. The United Nations had been formed in 1945, and many Americans hoped it could bring international peace (Diggins 75). The

United Nations had included education as part of its agenda.<sup>11</sup> Faulk suggested, as a way of beginning the course, that teachers use the readily available pamphlets published by the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR). This was also a reasonable suggestion. After all, the IPR wanted to promote the same type of international understanding that scholars like Faulk wanted to promote in their classrooms. This agenda, however, differentiates Faulk's proposal from the multicultural theories of composition we see today. The assumption that education alone brings about international understanding ignores the way that education perpetuates the ideological agenda of the institution that hopes to bring "understanding" about. An assumption such as this, which can still be seen in documents as recent as Unesco's World Education Report 2000, fails to critically reflect on the way economic and military power inevitably conflicts with the hope of understanding.

In March, 1947, two months after Faulk published this proposal, Truman appeared before Congress and promised that America would be responsible for intervening on the part of countries that were resisting Communism across the

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<sup>11</sup> Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads:

1. Everyone had the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose what kind of education that shall be given to their children. (qtd. in World Education Report 2000, 91)

globe. His speech, described by most historians as exaggerated, was meant to “‘scare hell’... out of Congress and the Public” (Diggins 76). It did, apparently, and indirectly led to Truman’s signing into law more stringent anticommunist domestic policy. Truman could not ask Americans—and their tax dollars—to support anticommunism abroad without doing something to assuage the anticommunists who argued that there was a threat within our own borders.

In March 1947, Truman signed Executive Order 9835, which established federal loyalty review boards. Albert Fried contends that this action “more than anything else [would] launch McCarthyism on its inexorable course” (28). He argues that the Truman Doctrine and the loyalty review act worked in conjunction with each other:

The Truman Doctrine, it will be remembered, condemned communism everywhere because its adherents subverted their governments for the sake of Soviet expansion and conquest. Such being the internal danger, it logically followed, all public agencies, state and local, and private institutions for that matter, must create their own loyalty review boards, with or without even the modicum of due process that the Truman one did, must acquire whatever material they could lay their hands on concerning people’s lives, habits, beliefs, associations, and relatives. (24)

This conjunction of the Truman Doctrine and the loyalty review act created a fear-driven, downward spiral in America. Looking for Communists everywhere, Americans’ anxiety about communism increased. Because of our increasing anxiety, there was a greater need to look for Communists. “A large component of

McCarthyism,” Fried argues, “was this process of cause and effect, effect and cause, feeding on each other” (25). This process, we will discover, influenced our universities as well by persuading most of us to disengage our lives and our classrooms from the political sphere.

But Faulk, suggesting that teachers begin a course in international understanding with pamphlets from the IPR, could not have known this would happen. Faulk could not have imagined that, four years later, Senator Pat McCarran’s newly formed Internal Security Subcommittee would, in Schrecker’s words,

swoop down on a barn in western Massachusetts and haul its contents back to Washington. The committee’s loot, the files of a private research organization called the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), would show, so McCarran and his staff believed, how Communist agents had managed to engineer the loss of China. (161)

Indeed, many Americans and many legislators believed that China had been ours to lose.<sup>12</sup> Citizens looked for someone to blame. Republicans not only blamed the Truman administration for this “loss,” they argued that it was the result of a

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<sup>12</sup> Edward Said’s book Orientalism and the rhetorical implication of his theory explains a great deal about how our conceptions of this “loss” helped open the realm for McCarthyism. The need for America to more actively engage in the process of “dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient,” (3) was heightened when Soviet Russia “gained” China. Russia would become, Said would argue, “a clever totalitarian enemy who collected allies for itself among gullible Oriental (African, Asian, undeveloped) nations” (107). America had to respond with economic and political carrots and sticks to gain as much of this undeveloped territory as possible. Rhetoric played, and continues to play, a central role in this process.

conspiracy that was inextricably tied to progressive politics and the New Deal. Because many academics had been involved with the IPR, this case, Schrecker argues, assured academics that they were not immune from the House and Senate investigations that were mushrooming around them.

By the time the IPR had been raided, however, many academics already knew that they were not immune from the effects of anticommunism. After all, anticommunism had never really disappeared in America, even when Russia was our ally in the war. In fact, some of the most rabid anticommunists had grown louder during WWII, perhaps because they were not getting the attention they had once enjoyed. Most academics could remember that before Pearl Harbor, many Americans were delighted when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. For some, it helped ensure that we could stay neutral in the war. “If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia,” then Senator Harry Truman had argued, “and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany.” This would, Truman argued, “kill as many as possible” (qtd. in Sirgiovanni 35). Other Americans maintained throughout the war that Russia was a greater threat to democracy than Germany. (Diggins 8)<sup>13</sup>

Also, academics may have been continuing to watch the career of Texas representative Martin Dies, who (as explained in the last chapter) had been

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<sup>13</sup> But many leftists also opposed American involvement in the war. Many, who had seen Wilson’s Fourteen Points violated after WWI, did not believe that war could ever make the world “safe for democracy.” “In the twenties, Diggins argues, “the impression grew that America had been seduced into the war by bankers, munitions producers, and British propaganda” (9). John Dewey wrote: “No matter what happens, stay out” (9).

leading the Special U.S. House Committee for the Investigation of Un-American Activities since 1938. Though historians generally agree that his red-baiting had more to do with his hatred of New Deal and progressive politics, he had pushed his anticommunist agenda all through the war and afterward. Sirgiovanni writes:

Dies used the committee as his personal vehicle for waging a demagogic crusade against a supposed Communist-directed plot to subvert the liberties of the American people. War or no war, this was a mission that Dies firmly believed was far too important to be sidetracked merely because it might injure the feelings of a military ally. (50)

Dies was considered a hair-shirt by many who served on House committees with him; he assumed that anyone who had supported Roosevelt's progressive policies were acting under the worst motives possible.<sup>14</sup>

Given this political climate, it seems reasonable to assume that most academics in the writing classroom would have shied away from Signi Faulk's rather optimistic proposal, and the fact that the IPR pamphlets would eventually be unavailable would be the least of these reasons. A much safer approach to teaching composition in the newly developing Cold War period might have seemed to be to approach it through ostensibly apolitical means. This was one reason why, after the war, General Semantics and propaganda analysis would come "to be regarded as useful in the teaching of language in speech and composition classes as well as in the communications course" (Berlin 94). As had

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<sup>14</sup> One of his harangues compelled literary critic Malcolm Cowley, who was working at the time as Chief Information Analyst for the Office of Facts and Figures, to resign.

been the case before the war, the assumptions behind propaganda analysis mirrored the assumptions of our culture. If there was fear and a certain paranoia in our assumption that large amounts of material entering our nation was designed specifically to subvert us, now, with the threat of nuclear war, the stakes were even higher. Propaganda analysis allowed us to resist and neutralize the threat.

During the war, the United States had engaged in one of the largest propaganda campaigns the world had ever known.<sup>15</sup> After the war, propaganda played an important role in managing the fears that Americans had of increasingly destructive weapons. As Guy Oakes explains:

This plan constituted a system of emotion management that would suppress an irrational terror of nuclear weapons and foster in its stead a more pragmatic nuclear fear. Civil defense programs would then be in a position to employ nuclear fear in their programs of human resource management. Nuclear fear, properly channeled, would motivate the public to deliver the domestic support that was regarded as essential to the policy of containment. (276)

The manipulation and management of fear, in other words, helped the government move forward with its plans for keeping the USSR within its newly defined realm of influence. It was important that citizens not be terrified of nuclear weapons, only afraid of the USSR and its potential for using them. Civil defense had to convince the people that they could protect themselves. Popular acceptance of deterrence as an admissible policy for achieving national

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<sup>15</sup> For a full discussion of this campaign, see Jessica A. Mayerson's "Theater of War: American Propaganda Films During the Second World War."

security depended upon the credibility of the proposition that even if deterrence failed, the consequences would still be tolerable. (291)

While much of this propaganda would not come about until the early fifties, once it was widely known that Russia had the bomb, the groundwork for this type of propaganda campaign was being set as early as 1947, as justification for the policy of containment (Diggins 81-82).

As we saw in the last chapter, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis stated that any particular type of propaganda “may be socially beneficial or socially harmful to millions of people” (518). “It is necessary,” therefore, “to focus upon the propagandist and his activities the searchlight of scientific scrutiny. Socially desirable propaganda will not suffer from such examination, but the opposite type will be detected and revealed for what it is” (518). At this juncture in history, we see tensions between science, scrutiny, and the national agenda. J. Robert Oppenheimer, who had originally approved Truman’s decision to use the bomb, “soon afterwards anguished about his decision, reminding his colleagues that physicists now had to recognize that they ‘have known sin’” (Diggins 51). It is difficult, in this case, to know what would have happened had Americans demanded that the searchlight of scientific scrutiny be placed on propaganda that helped manage our fear of nuclear annihilation, but the propaganda campaigns that we conducted in America give further evidence that the relationship between science and authority was becoming increasingly rhetorical.

The tensions that were brought about by this new relationship were most likely clear to many academics at the time. While our government was in the

business of analyzing materials that could be considered subversive to our government and our Constitution, it was creating, through nuclear science, a much greater threat—one that was essentially being repressed, or “managed.” Despite the fact, therefore, that in 1948 Henry Wallace’s Progressive Party drew “large audiences under the banners of peace and freedom,” (Diggins 105) progressive academics most likely suspected this venom would soon be turned toward our schools.

That is precisely what happened in July 1948, during the Canwell Committee’s investigations of subversive activities at the University of Washington. This investigation is important, Schrecker argues, because it set a precedent, nationwide, for university investigations. Because this case is essential to our understanding of the effects that the Cold War had on universities, and therefore writing instruction, we will need to carefully analyze this case, historically and rhetorically.

***“The Objective Quest of Truth:” The University of Washington Case***

In order to understand how Red Scare politics affected writing instruction, we must first analyze the structure of Red Scare politics, the procedures that Red Scare politics hinges on, and the way that the responsibility for “disciplining” communist and fellow traveling professors often shifted from one type of committee to another. “It helps to view McCarthyism as a process rather than a movement,” Ellen W. Schrecker explains, because

it took place in two stages. First, the objectionable groups and individuals were identified—during a committee hearing, for example, or an FBI

investigation; then, they were punished, usually by being fired. The bifurcated nature of this process diffused responsibility and made it easier for each participant to dissociate his or her action from the larger whole. Rarely did any single institution handle both stages of McCarthyism. In most cases, it was a government agency which identified the culprits and a private employer which fired them. (9)

The University of Washington case is significant because it is not only one of the first cases of McCarthyism in U.S. higher education, it also exemplifies the process that Schrecker describes. Therefore, an analysis of it will help us see how Red Scare politics worked and why it was so effective.

It will also give us a clearer picture of the objectivist pressures on writing teachers. “McCarthyism was,” as Schrecker argues, “a peculiarly American style of repression—nonviolent and consensual... Its mildness may well have contributed to its efficacy” (9). While this is certainly true, its nonviolent and consensual style also relied, we will see, on a particular type of objectivist epistemology. This epistemology, in conjunction with the threat of disciplinary repression, had a great effect on writing instruction in the early Cold War period.

As Schrecker explains, in the late forties there was great pressure for universities across the country to remove radical professors from their positions:

The federal government’s loyalty-security program acted as a catalyst. It transformed the Communist Party from an unpopular political movement into a threat to national security, and in the process legitimized the practice of weeding out suspected Communists from the payrolls of other

American employers. College teachers, it was quickly becoming clear, would not be immune. (93)

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), sensing this pressure, decided to take a stand on this issue, and they supported in theory the rather bold argument that membership in the CP was not “in and of itself” grounds for dismissal, as long as membership in the CP continued to be legal in the United States (94). The University of Washington was to be the first testing ground for this theory.

The House Un-American Committee (HUAC) hearings at the University of Washington began July 19, 1948, and lasted only a week. The committee found that there had been “few Communists at the University” (96).

Nevertheless, these hearings had profound effects not only at the University of Washington, but also at universities across America. Out of the eleven professors who were subpoenaed (six were members of the English Department), three were cited for contempt because they “refused to answer any questions about their political beliefs or associates” (96), and three refused to talk about who their associates were. The remaining five admitted to having once been members of the Communist Party and were willing to name their associates.

Raymond B. Allen, the university president, “realized that whatever the university did would have far-reaching implications” (Schrecker 97). Allen was in a dilemma. He knew that he “had to ensure that the University observe all the procedural requirements of academic freedom and take no action until the accused professors received a fair hearing from a committee of their peers” (97). Allen

also knew, because of pressure from both the public and from the Regents of the University, that he would have to “redefine academic fitness in such a way as to exclude members of the CP” (97). Allen met this objective by “showing that the professional requirements of ‘competency, honesty, and attention to duty’ were not ‘compatible with the secrecy of the Party’s methods and objectives, with the refusal of Communists to hold their party membership openly, with the commitment to dogmas that are held to be superior to scientific examination’” (97). This strategy was decidedly easier than that of proving that the teachers had somehow taught subversive materials in their classes. The HUAC, after all, had produced no evidence in this matter.

The university used the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF) to hold hearings for the professors who had not fully complied with the HUAC requests, the three who would not tell if they had ever been Communists and the three who would not name names. The two who admitted to being active members of the Communist Party—a medievalist in the English department and a philosopher—were fired, despite the CTAF’s recommendation to keep them on. One professor, a psychologist who refused to answer any of the questions posed to him by the university committee, was also fired. This decision had the CTAF’s approval. The three professors who refused to name names were kept on, but they were put on probation for two years after signing an affidavit that they were no longer in the Communist Party. This decision received national attention, and Schrecker argues that “Allen took upon himself the task of explaining what

Washington had done and became a national spokesman for the movement to eliminate Communists from academic life” (104).

A closer investigation of Allen’s documents proves this to be true in ways that are compelling to those of us in the field of rhetoric and composition. Going so far as to publish the record of the tenure cases at the University of Washington as a book titled Communism and Academic Freedom, Allen redefines freedom with rhetorical complexity: “If the subsequent history of American education confirms the rightness of the University [of Washington]’s decision,” he writes in his introduction,

it will be because the further experience of free minds in a free society proves that academic freedom means not alone the right to hold unpopular views but the obligation to hold views which, shaped by the accumulation of tested evidence, are subject to no dictation from outside the mind of the holder. (19)

In other words, Allen explicitly argues that his decision will be considered right and just if academic communities in the future believe that academic freedom means that 1) professors must hold views that are the result of an accumulated body of tested evidence, and 2) that these views emerge from those findings, not from outside forces.

This statement reveals at least one thing about Allen’s position. It shows that his objectivist assumptions about university epistemology, his belief that knowledge exists in an objective, empirically verifiable realm, were *unexamined*. He does not answer, for example, the types of questions we would want answered

in the field of rhetoric and composition: How should a professor define “tested evidence”? How much of this evidence, however it is defined, is required before it is considered an “accumulated body”? And does not this accumulated body of evidence require dissent, in order to ensure that there is an open, continuing progression of ideas? The field of medicine, to which Allen belonged, may not have needed to answer these questions, but the answers to these question would have been—as they are now—essential to writing teachers at the time. Allen’s statement reveals a monolithic assumption about university epistemology, while the field of writing instruction, because of its interdisciplinary nature, often relies on multi-modal ways of thinking.<sup>16</sup>

Objectivist epistemologies have had rhetorical currency since the time of Locke. Since before the eighteenth century, many scholars have revived the classical idea that language was a dangerous phenomenon, one that obscured the truth that was emerging in the scientific realm. This led to calls for language reform and the belief that language could be “purified” of rhetoric. The ideal form of language would be transparent, reflecting the truth that science found. *Perspicuity* would become the ideal rhetorical form, a form that was supposedly devoid of rhetoric. Of course, while eighteenth-century language theorists were attempting, generally speaking, to foster a secular tradition that was divorced from ecclesiastical power, Allen used objectivist epistemology to enforce political power in the secular university.

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<sup>16</sup> Janice Laurer and William Asher give a comprehensive picture of the multimodality inherent in our field. Generally speaking, they discuss empirical inquiry as one form of inquiry amongst many, including “historical, linguistic, philosophical, and rhetorical” (3) modes of inquiry.

Allen's reliance on objectivist epistemology raises two questions for this study: What effects did objectivist epistemologies have on writing instruction and—more importantly for this study—what effects did these epistemologies have on writing instruction when they were formulated for this specific political purpose? Of course, many scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric have explored how a purely objectivist epistemology hindered and continues to hinder writing instruction (Miller, Crowley, and Berlin). For our purposes, it should be enough to say that objectivist epistemology reduces the rhetorical triangle to logos only. “Rhetorical situation” and context disappear. Issues of audience values (pathos) and writer credibility (ethos) are repressed. On a practical level, teachers are encouraged to present essays in terms of their formal characteristics only in four modes—exposition, description, narration, and argument—without considering the fuller rhetorical possibilities of these forms. In terms of the five canons of rhetoric, there is a strong emphasis on style and arrangement. Invention, delivery and memory become less emphasized, if at all.<sup>17</sup> The end result of this type of instruction is alienation on the part of students from their own writing processes. For instructors, teaching becomes primarily mechanical correction and checking to see that student writing “reflects” these disembodied rhetorical forms. Many composition historians have dubbed this type of disembodied rhetoric, which is really anti-rhetorical, “current-traditional

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<sup>17</sup> Many writers echo the romantic view that invention is an art and cannot be taught.

rhetoric.”<sup>18</sup> This type of rhetoric robs teachers of one of the primary powers of a rhetorical education, the ability for students and teachers to take on perspectives and positions with which they may not necessarily agree and to learn to argue both sides of an issue for greater understanding. This could include, of course, controversial, radical, or unpopular ideas.<sup>19</sup>

In order to understand what happens to writing instruction when objectivist epistemologies get formulated for the specific purpose of protecting universities from Red Scare politics, however, we have to look more carefully at how administrations dealt with anticommunism in American universities. After all, Allen was not concerned with how his epistemological assumptions would affect writing instruction, nor was he interested in creating grounds for an academic debate. Instead, he was working out an extremely effective rhetorical strategy for assuaging pressures from the public and from certain corners of government regarding Communists at the University of Washington.

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of current-traditional rhetoric, see James Berlin’s Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges, as well as his Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985. Also see Sharon Crowley’s The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Thomas P. Miller’s The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces.

<sup>19</sup> We can see some of these fuller rhetorical impulses in Signi Faulk’s proposal and in Weisinger’s. Faulk’s proposal, which hopes to achieve a greater understanding in the world by exposing students to cultures other than their own, emphasizes the experiences of other cultures, not the disembodied study of them. Weisinger’s proposal, which uses elements of objectivism to help students strive for a fuller understanding of the world, is explicitly linked to one ethical question: how can we use knowledge to create a better democracy? These rhetorical impulses, though they are limited, get suppressed during the age of McCarthyism.

The reason Allen's strategy was so effective was that it ensured that membership in the CP was outside the realm of academic debate. Being a member of the CP did not mean one was too far to the left; it meant instead that one belonged to an organization that would pervert academic process. This allowed him to avoid the issue of whether or not he was persecuting a small minority of unpopular Communists. He shifted the focus away from that issue by inviting his audience to see communism as a dangerous perversion of the fundamental ideals of the U.S. academy.

Much of Allen's language, we should point out, paralleled the Institute for Propaganda Analysis's "How to Detect Propaganda." It argues, "propaganda is expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups with reference to predetermined ends" (518). Propaganda, it argues, differs from scientific analysis because

the propagandist is trying to "put something across," good or bad, whereas the scientist is trying to discover truth and fact. Often, the propagandist does not want careful scrutiny and criticism; he wants to bring about a specific action. Because the action may be socially beneficial or socially harmful to millions of people, it is necessary to focus upon the propagandist and his activities the searchlight of scientific scrutiny. Socially desirable propaganda will not suffer from such examination, but the opposite type will be detected and revealed for what it is. (518)

Communism, Allen believed, was suspect because Communists did not bring the expression of their ideas into the public forum. Meetings and memberships were held in secret. They were trying, therefore, to put something across and bring about a specific action, which was the overthrowing of the capitalist economy in America. It is important to point out that Allen is not exactly wrong on this point. The Comintern demanded unquestioning loyalty on the part of its members. It was also a revolutionary organization that did not exclude—at least in theory—the use of force and violence. Indeed, anyone who belonged to a secret organization that met these criteria today would be considered suspect.

Because Allen did not want to be accused of hypocrisy, he published the findings of the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom as well as his own recommendations. Clearly, Allen wanted it to be clear that he was on the side of scientific analysis and not on the side of propaganda. Unlike the Communist, who relied on secrecy, he wanted his opinions and his actions to be put under the searchlight of academic scrutiny. In fact, he believed that

if other educators will study carefully the record of the University of Washington cases, criticizing them and accepting or rejecting the reasoning we have followed, all of them may then eventually, by processes which are peculiar to America, to democracy, and to education, arrive at sound and wise solutions to these problems. The University of Washington welcomes such criticism in the spirit of this great tradition of unfettered inquiry and judgment. (13)

While we can admire his faith in academic process and in democracy, what is finally most disturbing about this gesture is its hypocrisy. After all, this is not merely an idea that is being discussed. It is instead a record of real people *who had already lost* their livelihoods as a result of his decision. Even more ironic is the proof that he did not follow his own injunction about holding views that are the results of an accumulated body of tested evidence. As we will see, he only agreed with the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom when it was convenient for him, when he already agreed with the decisions they had reached. It will become clear, through a rhetorical analysis of Allen's text, that very little scientific or logical argument takes place in his argument. Allen claims throughout to draw his authority from science, but he draws his authority, instead, from his position of power. In fact, a close investigation of Allen's argument proves that he engages in propaganda of his own, wanting to bring about a specific action or end without considering any of the evidence that had accumulated in front of him.

Take, for example, the cases of Laurer Vs. Butterworth and Laurer Vs. Phillips. In both of these cases, the charge that was eventually filed against the "respondents" was that they were members of the Communist Party, U.S.A. After briefly describing the CP, and addressing the question as to whether or not it seemed, based on the evidence before them, that Butterworth (a medievalist in the English Department) and Phillips (a philosopher) would ever use violence to overthrow the American government (it was decided they would not), the CTAF boiled the problem down to "simply this: Taking the admitted fact that

respondents Phillips and Butterworth are members of the Communist Party, U.S.A., is there a case for removal present under the Administrative Code?” (29). In both of these cases, the majority of the Committee agreed the administrative code provided *no basis* for recommending the removal of Butterworth and Phillips (29-30).

This clearly angered Allen, and despite the fact that he drew on science to give credence to his position, he was not above using rhetoric to persuade his audience. First, he argued that the committee was wrong to define incompetency as only professional incompetency. Allen wanted the term incompetency to apply to any “action, condition, or attitude which interferes with the proper and adequate performance of [a professor’s] duties” (89). He states that Butterworth and Phillips are incompetent solely because they are members of the CP:

Clandestine activity such as Butterworth’s and Phillips’ in the Communist Party meant that they have forsaken their duty to protect the University’s integrity and to pursue an objective quest of truth in favor of a propagandistic mission entirely unrelated to real educational and scholarly effort. (90)

In order to accept this argument, readers must first grant that Butterworth and Phillips engaged in clandestine activity simply because they were members of the Communist Party. Butterworth and Phillips admitted to being members of the CP. Earlier in his argument, Allen established that the CP was a clandestine organization because it required its members to keep their political affiliation with the party secret. In this way, membership in the CP becomes “clandestine

activity.” The danger inherent in this assumption, however, is that the term “clandestine activity” implies more than membership in the CP. This sophistic use of metonymy, in which “clandestine activity” substitutes for “Communist Party membership,” allows Allen to imply action without having to prove what actions took place. This politically effective trope allows Allen’s argument to proceed past the second, more difficult, warrant. By blurring what clandestine activity actually means, Allen is more likely to convince his audience that these professors have “forsaken their duties” as academics.

While his definition of clandestine activity is blurry, he is very specific when he states what he believes to be the duty of an academic. The duty of an academic, he argues, is to protect a university’s integrity and to pursue an objective quest of truth. Here again, we see a tension emerging based on an unexamined objectivism. Allen implies that academics have a duty to protect a university’s integrity *by* pursuing an “objective quest of truth.” This does not, in any way, set back knowledge production in the field from which Allen came, but in the field of writing instruction, it creates many problems. Just as scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric today would not see these two duties as interchangeable, later in this study we will see that it was precisely around the conflation of objectivity and integrity that writing teachers felt the most anxiety when responding to Red Scare politics.

Generally speaking, teachers feared that there would be a fundamental confusion on the part of administrators about the definition of integrity and objectivity. Teachers felt that if they brought any type of controversial materials

into the classroom, if they took on any positions that might be construed as objectionable to the community, they could be at risk of threatening the reputation of the university. This could easily be confused with threatening the integrity of the university, as this particular case makes clear. At the same time, teachers were aware that texts containing extreme, radical, and controversial ideas were a good way to engage students in meaningful debates, which in turn led to better writing.

This issue finds little resolution during this historical period. Ironically, neither Butterworth nor Phillips was ever found to have biased their teaching in any way. Both seemed to be, the CTAF found, very “objective” teachers. But because Allen fused the protection of the university’s integrity with the “objective quest of truth,” it would eventually become easier for him to “prove” that they were biased teachers simply because the university’s integrity had been called into question by the HUAC. In terms of logic, this is known as circular reasoning. Butterworth and Phillips were guilty of not protecting university integrity because their appearance before the HUAC threatened the “integrity” (*i.e.*, the reputation) of the university.

Of course this is not enough to argue for the firing of Butterworth and Phillips. What Allen needed was a connection between people who have failed to protect the university’s integrity and to pursue an “objective quest of truth” to something related to academic incompetence. That is why the final warrant in Allen’s argument becomes the most important one. It allows him to make this connection. People who fail to protect the university’s integrity and to pursue an

“objective quest of truth,” he contends, favor a propagandistic mission entirely unrelated to real educational and scholarly effort. To accept this warrant requires that we accept one of the most common logical fallacies, the either-or. In this case, we have to allow no middle ground in university epistemology. Professors are either *entirely* off in left field somewhere—on propagandistic missions—or they are on an objective quest, not *for*—but *of*—truth.

Though it may not be well to overemphasize this point, something could be made of the fact that Allen chose to use the preposition *of* instead of *for* in relation to the objective quest on which professors should be engaged. “The objective quest of truth” implies that we are passive participants in a disembodied academic process. “The objective quest for truth” could imply that we have perspectives from which we stand when trying to find truth or argue for it, that we exist in our relations to truth in a constant state of dialog (or as Burke puts it: there is inquiry; there is pamphleteering). Whether or not Allen intended to imply this with his choice of prepositions, his position on the matter is very clear. As academics, he suggests, we exist in relation to truth as passive participants. Our job is to report our findings to the community, not present our perspectives. We can also assume that this perspective defines our jobs as teachers as well. That may be why he assumes that there is no distinction between teaching from one’s own perspective in a classroom and trying to indoctrinate students.

When we consider the warrants that Allen’s argument hinges on, we can see that he fails, logically, to connect the respondents’ membership in the Communist Party to their being on a propagandistic mission in their classes.

Through circular reasoning, Allen confuses the integrity of a university with the reputation of a university. He sets up a false binary between objectivity and propagandistic missions, allowing no space for teachers to engage perspectives in the classroom, no space for rhetoric or the humanities. And, most importantly, he connects CP membership to propagandistic missions in the classroom without giving any evidence that Butterworth and Phillips biased their teaching. This means, if we assume that science is based on logical principles, that Allen's argument fails to stand up to the searchlight of scientific scrutiny that he claims is essential to academic process. Our analysis of this argument also proves that Schrecker is correct when she contends that McCarthyism is effective because of its structure. Academics were, no doubt, aware of the logical inconsistencies in Allen's argument. One would not have needed training in the system of argumentation that Stephen Toulmin was revitalizing at this particular moment in history to see the inconsistencies. If we were watching any of our colleagues being fired today for any of the same "reasons," we would no doubt be aware of the same logical problems. But the problems that academics faced during McCarthyism were not within the realm of logic; they were within the realm of power. As we can see illustrated in Communism and Academic Freedom, it was permissible for academics to argue against Allen's decision, but it was also pointless. In the civic realm, however, it was dangerous to argue in any way against the demagogues of Red Scare politics. To argue in this realm was to risk becoming a suspect oneself. This would have made it more essential for

academics at this time to make concessions, keep silent, and pretend that authoritarian truth was actually scientific truth in order to keep their jobs.

After all, academics during this time could neither turn to civil nor administrative law for defense. It was not against the law to be a member of the Communist Party in America, but this did not protect a person's right to hold a job. As Allen argues:

It is not against the law for any American citizen to own stock in a company. It would be occasion for removal, however, if it were discovered that a judge had prejudiced his decision by the ownership of stock in a company in such a case. An important function of the University is to teach citizenship. For this teaching to be in the hands of faculty men who secretly belong to an organization advocating the complete overthrow of the American system should be no more tolerated than the unethical and immoral behavior of the judge. (91)

This analogy would have opened the door to an interesting debate about the limits of academic freedom if Allen had proven, or if the HUAC had proven, that Butterworth and Phillips had prejudiced their teaching in any way. If they had taken an active role in recruiting students into the CP, if they had suggested to students that the time was ripe for an economic revolution in America, if Phillips had created a course packet containing nothing but modern communist philosophies, if Butterworth had been using Medievalism as a guise for thinly-veiled communist propaganda, then grounds for an academic *debate* might have been set. Some questions could have been raised in the public forum. Not only

other educators, but the entire public, as Allen so optimistically asserted, “by processes which are peculiar to America, to democracy, and to education, could arrive at sound and wise solutions to these problems” (14). We could have asked ourselves, “If an important function of the university is to teach citizenship, what does it mean to teach citizenship in America at the beginning of the Cold War?” But the analogy fails. Neither Butterworth nor Phillips had tried to indoctrinate their students, so they were not like the judge who had decided in favor of a company in which she or he owned stock. Butterworth and Phillips were found to be fairly “objective” teachers who also happened to be members of the Communist Party.

Perhaps it is understandable why the University of Washington did not want to be the location for a full-scale debate in America about the limits of academic freedom. No administrator wants that type of public pressure placed on the institution under his or her care, and one could argue that Allen had no real choice in this matter. He could not afford to risk losing state support of his institution for a principle. Because of the political climate around him, he had to sacrifice the livelihoods of two professors who were, after all, members of a revolutionary organization that seemed to stand in direct opposition to democratic principles. But if Allen truly believed that an important function of the university is to teach democratic citizenship, his decision had tremendous implications regarding the type of citizen that universities would try to create in the early Cold War period. “The great tradition of unfettered inquiry and judgment” (13) would be limited to the objective realm of scientific knowledge.

This issue cannot fail to engage us in the field of rhetoric and composition studies today because Allen's conception of citizenship relies on a citizen becoming an object of truth. The citizen is on a quest certainly, but it is an objective quest that seems to equate conformity with truth. Allen explicitly reinforces this conception of the new American citizen when he responds to the Committee's argument that the administrative code of the university "never specifically stated to the faculty that membership in the Communist Party was not sanctioned by the Administration" (91). First, Allen reminds the Committee that he had on many occasions announced that there were no Communists teaching at the University of Washington and that the two defendants should have come forward at that point "to either disabuse the public of the untruth the President had expressed or to come to the President himself to admit the fact" (91-92). Then he asks: "If they did not think such membership was in disfavor, why did they keep their membership secret?" (92)

They most likely kept their membership secret because they felt intimidated by his vehement proclamations denying Communists the right to teach. They may have also felt that it was possible to be a member of the Communist Party and simply not adhere entirely to the CP line, or believed the CP line in their private lives, but kept it out of their professional ones. We have to assume that Allen had considered this possibility (the majority of the professors in the Butterworth and Phillips cases argues this), but found that it was not politically advantageous to address it when responding to the case. Regardless, it is clear that Allen saw a new function for universities in the early Cold War

period. He had outlined this function in his inaugural address at the University of Washington, and felt that it was relevant to these particular cases. Because of its relevance to our themes, it is worth quoting in the way that he excerpted it:

If a University ever loses its dispassionate objectivity and incites or leads parades, it will have lost its integrity as an institution and abandoned the timeless, selfless quest of truth... It is for this reason that a teacher has a special obligation to deal in a scholarly and scientific way with controversial questions... Fortunately few faculty members make this mistake [of not being scholarly and scientific]. If they do make it, the institution from which they come will lose its academic standing, *as they will lose their security.* (93)

Allen then lets his readers know that he added the italics to this quote. It is here that we see Allen at his most self-serving. He too may be worried about losing his position and needs, at this point, to make it abundantly clear that he had done—and was willing to do—everything in his power to keep CP members out of the University of Washington. So six words uttered during an inaugural address become a policy statement simply because, he argues, “this statement has never been challenged by anyone within or without the University. I therefore regard it as not a mere statement of the President but as the policy of the University as a whole” (93).

What is even more remarkable about Allen’s argument, however, is that it maintains, without qualification, that the central function of a university is to be on a “timeless, selfless quest of truth” (93). In Time in the Ditch: American

Philosophy and the McCarthy Era, John McCumber underscores Allen's belief in this type of epistemology. It is around this phrase that McCumber centers his argument that the traumatic political pressures of McCarthyism forced philosophers to focus on the universal and the timeless, which in turn made philosophy lose the power to critique its contemporary situation. McCumber implies that English studies suffered less damage than philosophy because people knew that English was needed and therefore was immune to the attacks in a way that philosophy was not. This is only a half-truth. In the early Cold War period, many people felt that the type of English that was needed was primarily objectivist. The disciplinary pressure to conform to this type of English was certainly great, especially in composition and communication courses. McCumber is certainly correct when he argues that Allen's statement "denies the teacher and scholar any other goal than finding and communicating the truth" (McCumber 99), but at least, in the field of philosophy, logical positivism was a method for examining truths. When Allen's statement gets translated to the field of writing instruction, it limits the teacher and scholar of English to no other goal than that of communicating an already present truth clearly and/or beautifully. This problem, of course, is central to this dissertation, so I will return to it later in this chapter, after reviewing more of the historical context of this case.

The Board of Regents sided with President Allen, so many universities, especially state supported ones, followed the example of the University of Washington. As Schrecker explains:

The University of Washington case had cleared the way. As a result of that case and its aftermath in California and elsewhere, large segments of the academic community—professors and administrators alike—had decided that Communists were no longer fit to teach. (125)

An investigation of publications in the field of English will show, in the next chapter, that we too were a part of this large segment of the academic community. Teachers in the field of English decided (either explicitly or implicitly through silence) that Communists were no longer fit to teach.

It is difficult to know, looking back, if we could have done otherwise. McCarthy would later promise that he would be “‘going into the education system, exposing Communists and Communist thinkers... in educational institutions.’” He had argued that he would be doing this, paradoxically, in order to “‘promote freedom of thought and expression in college’” (qtd. in Schrecker 180). Allen most likely wanted to take care of the problem before outsiders came in to do it themselves. Schrecker explains that Allen and others like him

presented themselves as defenders of academic freedom. In an important sense, they were. For by redefining academic freedom to require the exclusion of Communists from the academy and explaining that necessity in professional, rather than political terms, they were hoping to keep outsiders at bay. (105)

Universities across the country felt they had to “cleanse [themselves] of Communists or risk ‘playing into the hands of native reaction which would like to wipe out all liberal dissent’” (105). As it turned out, the decision that Allen made

at the University of Washington did protect academic freedom as it was redefined, but at a tremendous cost—not only to the individuals who were the subjects of anticommunist witch-hunts, but to the overall health of the academic community as well. Like Truman, many liberals in the academy wanted to prove they were not soft on communism before demagogues could do more damage. Whether academics had been members of the Communist Party or not, this must have created a stifling environment for progressive and humanist academics in 1948. We can also assume that first-year writing teachers, who were straining for political, economic, and cultural currency in the academy, would have found it even more difficult to employ the full potential of rhetoric in the writing classroom.

Despite Truman's progressive stances on racial equality and his reelection, anticommunism expanded exponentially at this time. Schrecker argues that state-level anticommunism applied considerable force to teachers after Truman's reelection. New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania, California, Oklahoma, and Georgia enacted loyalty oaths in the late forties. Obviously, the environment that the oaths and the well-publicized trials created struck fear into anyone who had ever associated with the Communist Party. But what is even more important is that the objectivist epistemology that universities used to protect themselves against anticommunist attacks affected teachers as much as the attacks themselves. As the rest of this chapter will show, writing teachers felt an internal need to conform to objectivist epistemology at the beginning of the Cold War era. Much of this need can be attributed to the effects

of Red Scare politics. Anyone who had seen or heard the HUAC hearings knew that their methods had little to do with facts. Because of the structure of domestic anticommunism during this time, it was either pointless or dangerous to try to argue one's case. This may have caused some professors in the field of English to fall into silence during this time. Others, as we will examine later in this chapter, may have attempted to divorce themselves from politics by employing the methods of the New Critics; and others may have decided that it would be wise to prove their commitment to the American way of life by espousing their own brand of liberal anticommunism.

***Anticommunist Liberals: the Move Toward the Vital Center***

One of the most vocal of these professors was Sidney Hook, the very same “recent interpreter of Marx” and source for much of the communist voice in Carl Becker’s imaginary dialog. “Once a Communist or fellow traveler himself,” Albert Fried explains, “Hook for years had been damning Communism and its soft-headed dupes—*i.e.*, popular fronters—in the name of his own reading of Marx” (51). Interestingly enough, when Brooks and Warren published Modern Rhetoric in 1949, they included Becker’s dialog in a section on “Articles of Propaganda and Opinion.” This section represents many of the issues we have covered so far regarding liberal anticommunism: the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, Becker’s dialog, and the theories of Sidney Hook are included, but there are also works by Arthur Koestler, B.F. Skinner, C.S. Lewis, and Dorothy Canfield.

What is ironic is that all these articles point toward a liberal idea of anticommunism without including real works of communist thought. Becker's dialog, of course, is no real dialog at all: the cards are already stacked against the Communist. Becker creates a dialog between a liberal and a Communist. The Communist employs Hooks's interpretation of Marx to convince the liberal to accept his position, but the liberal refuses, in exactly the same way that Hooks's reading of Marx requires the liberal to refuse the Communist's position. Likewise, the IPA creates a world view that encourages students to use scientific method to free themselves from the dangers of outside influences, but it does so in a less comprehensive way than does Lasswell's writings on propaganda. Skinner's article makes a case for behavioral science as a way of achieving "the ultimate goals of democracy" (536); C.S. Lewis comments upon the baseness of human beings; and Koestler argues that "it is time for the American liberal to grow up" (555) and face the ambiguities of living in a cold world age. "Western democracy," he argues, "is not white but gray" (554), but he believes that the gray world of democracy is better than the total darkness of communist Russia. Finally, Dorothy Canfield, while she strains toward some type of resolution between cultures, only emphasizes understanding between individuals. "We can feel friendly," she argues, "only with people with whom we have a good deal in common. The real barrier to international good-will is that we do not realize that there are such people in every nation and every race on earth" (568-569). Because she believes that there are also "evil people" in every nation and every race on earth, all six essays reflect the basic assumptions of Vital Center

liberalism. Brooks and Warren, by recreating the fundamental character of this type of liberalism in Modern Rhetoric, may have helped to ensure the economic success of their popular textbook.

Given what we know about the political climate at this time, Vital Center philosophy would have appealed to academic liberals, but this appeal has deeper roots. Cronin argues that

the legacy of New Deal reform and wartime planning, and its success in generating good jobs and decent wages, meant also that anticommunist liberalism could present itself as a politics of growth, as the political philosophy justifying and underpinning Keynesian policymaking, the mixed economy, and the welfare state. (9)

After the war, academics could gravitate toward the center as a way of arguing for economic growth in a mixed economy, which included further funding of the academy. This funding, through the strengthening of the welfare state, could also help the government take a more active role in helping the working class, and because this type of liberalism was anticommunist, academics could try to stand simultaneously against communism and more conservative demagogues like Dies and, eventually, McCarthy. A new brand of humanism, Vital Center liberalism was a safer orientation from which to stand than progressivism, not to mention socialism or communism. As Fried explains, the Vital Center formula, “posited the relevance to politics of the notion of ‘original sin.’ [It] warned of man’s will to power, a menace which could never be eliminated, and of the fallacy of utopian thought, which failed to take human weakness into account” (12). What is

unfortunate about this position is that, while it may be intellectually comforting, and politically and economically safe, it is a repressive form of liberalism, for reasons that become clear when we look at Arthur Schlesinger's 1949 book The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom.

Outlining the basic assumptions of Vital Center liberalism, the book defines what being a liberal in the Cold War age should mean. Because this book helps us understand this brand of liberalism so thoroughly, it will help to investigate the ways it relates to rhetoric and its use of rhetoric. In this book, Schlesinger attempts to "report on the fundamental enterprise of re-examination and self-criticism which liberalism has undergone in the last decade" (vii). Liberals who grew up under Roosevelt's New Deal, he argues, did not have the same type of faith in communism that liberals of a previous generation had held. Roosevelt had restored the liberal's hope that democracy could and would take care of its own (viii). "The Soviet experience," he argues, "on top of the rise of fascism, reminded [his] generation rather forcibly that man was, indeed, imperfect, and that the corruptions of power could unleash great evil in the world" (ix). Because of this realization, liberals and conservatives alike "discovered a new dimension of experience—the dimension of anxiety, guilt and corruption" (ix). It is on this ground that Schlesinger built a new type of liberalism, a type that he believed would be "under attack from the far right and the far left" (ix) in America. He explicitly states, however, that he will spend a great deal more time discussing how communism is the enemy of liberalism than is fascism.

It is ironic that the far left was considered to be a greater enemy to the left than the far right, but this irony underscores the reason that Vital Center liberalism failed to stand up against the more conservative pressures that were shaping the academy at this time. Anticommunism in America created a climate that would not allow for real dialogic thought. This is because liberal anticommunists—whom Powers describes as people who found the Communist Party both “despicable and annoying,” but who did not see subversion as a real threat to America—would always be overshadowed by what Powers calls “countersubversives.” These people believed, wholeheartedly, that Communists were “infecting the country with collectivist values incompatible with American traditions, with the goal of eventually imposing a Soviet-style system on the United States” (214). Cyndy Hendershot argues that it was the countersubversives and their philosophies that were “most readily embraced by the media” (109). “Hence,” she argues, “the best-selling accounts of anticommunism tended to come from this camp” (109). This fact cannot be overemphasized; it underscores the reason that McCarthy and other anticommunists would be able to capture so much attention in the increasingly important media spotlight.

Countersubversives got attention from the media because of their extremism. This media attention concerned academic administrators, who did not want radicalism to be associated with their universities. This administrative concern affected everyday teachers, who did not want media attention brought to any of their teachings practices. This is why conservative anticommunism, or

countersubversion, would always trump liberal anticommunism in the academic realm. Administrators had to make their decisions in order to assuage the demands of conservative anticommunists. Teachers had to make their decisions based on what could possibly happen if the general political climate got worse.

Despite its claims for vitality, therefore, Vital Center liberalism was too subtle a position. For leftist professors, becoming an object of an anticommunist witch-hunt was always a lingering threat, one that was always present in the everyday lives of teachers. Red Scare politics disciplined us without necessarily being explicitly present in our lives. The metaphorical power of countersubversive imagery increased the intensity of this discipline. “In Cold War Motives and the Rhetorical Metaphor,” Robert L. Ivie succinctly describes some of the metaphors that Americans began to view the Soviet Union during this time:

Summarized briefly, these vehicles illustrate the rhetorical essentials of the logic of confrontation. The nation’s adversary is characterized as a mortal threat to freedom, a germ infecting the body politic, a plague upon the liberty of humankind, and a barbarian intent upon destroying civilization.

(72)

This logic of confrontation played itself out in many different arenas, including the academic one. Countersubversives created an atmosphere in America where one was either with them or with the Communists. As we know, people are more willing to accept the either/or fallacy on faith if they believe that times are dire. The anticommunist crusade helped create this ominous atmosphere in the public

imagination. Against this backdrop, Vital Center liberals found it difficult to “sustain a delicate balance between their commitments to civil liberties and [their] commitments to anticommunism” (Diggins 171). Administrators had to take actions that would assuage countersubversives, not the subtler liberal anticommunists. Considering all this, teachers may have felt they had to take actions that would keep administrators happy if the searchlight of scrutiny ever fell on their teaching practices.

***The Center Holds (by Launching an Attack on Progressives)***

Both conservative and liberal anticommunism placed enormous pressure on progressive teachers. In his book, Schlesinger argues that capitalism weakens a nation’s resolve to face conflicts, and Schlesinger attempts to create a center that was not only vital, but that is infused with a masculine sense of vitality. In other words, he attempts to respond to the countersubversive logic of confrontation with combat of his own. For example, when condemning the United States’s reliance on the business community, he does not do so on the basis of the economic inequality to which the business community contributes. He suggests, instead, “in the end, there will be no one ready to go down swinging for institutions so abstract, impersonal and remote” (27). To go down swinging, in this case, becomes an end in itself. The left, he continuously argues, needs ideas and institutions for which people are willing to fight.

This could have been a rhetorically effective strategy for his time and audience, especially when attacking countersubversives:

For the Neanderthals are alive and hungry, not to be appeased by slogans; they are shambling around, supporting the Un-American Activities Committee, campaigning against Keynesian textbooks in the colleges, conspiring against the trade-union movement, inveighing against free milk for school children and smearing all non-conformists as Communists.

(32)

Despite the ferocity of this attack, he saves most of his intensity for attacks on the left, especially the more progressive leftist elements that believe in non-violence. “One can admire the serenity of those who follow Gandhi’s faith in non-violence” he contends,

But one must face the fact that none of these “solutions” solves very much except the complexes of the individual who adopts them. They raise questions which must be raised; they provide the basis perhaps for a searching moral criticism of the existing order; but they leave the main forces of social chaos untouched. A Thoreau or a Gandhi, who has gone himself through intense moral ordeals, has earned the most profound moral respect. But it is a far cry from Thoreau or Gandhi to the ineffectual escapists who in their name engage in such practices as conscientious objection in time of war. (7)

To casually dismiss the moral ordeals that many C.O.s, who had not reached the literary or political status of Thoreau and Gandhi, went through during WWII was easy for Schlesinger to do. There had been, after all, relatively few of them during WWII, and though America had not yet entered the Korean conflict in

1949, C.O.s would find—just a year later—that there were not many political platforms from which they could speak.

This attack on nonviolent epistemologies allowed Vital Center liberals to forcefully separate themselves from the progressive community. Schlesinger uses metaphors of combat to more fully delineate this divide. He also resorts to name-calling, attaching the adjective “doughface” to the progressive liberal. The defining characteristic of a progressive “is the sentimentality of his approach to politics and culture” (36). In contrast to the Communist, the progressive is soft, believing in such naïve conceptions as the perfectibility of humankind. The progressive, Schlesinger contends, also willfully ignores what Communists plan to do to America. The “Doughface Progressive,” has many “fatal weaknesses:”

A weakness for impotence, because progressivism believes that history will make up for human error; a weakness for rhetoric, because it believes that man can be reformed by argument; a weakness for economic fetishism, because it believes that the good in man will be liberated by a change in economic institutions, a weakness for political myth, because Doughface optimism requires somewhere an act of faith in order to survive the contradictions of history. (40-41)

History and rhetoric both, Schlesinger argues, prove that humankind is not perfectible. The progressive is subject to the “endless task of explaining why, in spite of history and in spite of rhetoric, he does not always behave that way” (45). That is why, he argues, they have a weakness for totalitarianism. People who fall

for the illusion of perfectibility find systems where the self gets subsumed by the state very attractive.

Schlesinger argues that rhetoric continues to play an important role under totalitarianism:

People under totalitarian rule are hypnotized by such incantatory slogans into a condition of political exhaustion from which they can be stirred only by the most ferocious rhetoric. Hence the mad-dog fascist-beast language which characterizes totalitarian oratory. (76)

Here again we find paranoia about propaganda, but where the objectivist uses “pure” science to counter the effects of propaganda, throughout his book, Schlesinger uses, through an appeal linked directly to writing, the American ideal of the individual:

Writers who accept easy social formulas may gain a superficial and temporary clarity about the world they live in; but they pay a price for allowing others to tell them what they ought to think and write. They lose their own insights, and harden their talents. Many writers who take this path become cynical, and even abandon writing. They finally reach the point where they don’t know their own problems, and are completely disoriented. The writer, it is clear, must have social perspectives—but they must be his own. The susceptibility to programs corrupts the artist by distorting and eventually superseding the personal truths by which he is nourished. (124)

Remembering that Raymond B. Allen believed that the scholar should always be on a “timeless, selfless quest of truth,” we find proof that the ideal of the autonomous subject not only affected empirical epistemologies in the Cold War period, but also humanist ones. In this case, the individual on a quest for “his own” truth served as ground for which a new humanist liberalism could be reformed.

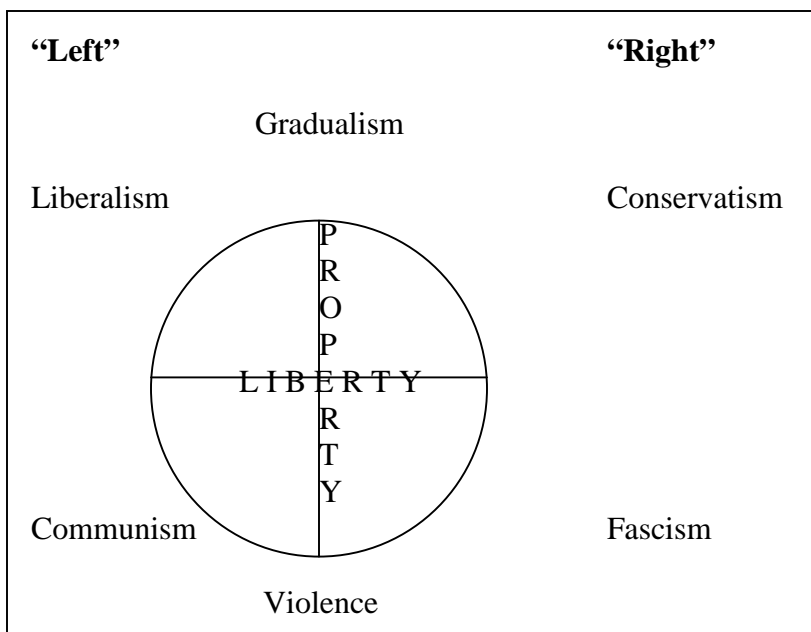
Of course this liberalism was not really new. Allen and Schlesinger represent the resurgence of Enlightenment and Romanticist epistemologies under different guises. The emphasis on an autonomous subject that is engaged on an objective quest of truth mirrors an Enlightenment condition that Bender and Wellbery argue has to be present to bring about the impossibility of rhetoric. In the Enlightenment, they argue, transparency and the notion of objectivity emerged “as the leading values of theoretical and practical discourse” (22). Scientific discourse, therefore, became “anchored in ‘objectivity’” (22). The emphasis on personal truths that we see in Schlesinger mirrors the Romantic condition that Bender and Wellbery argue has to be present to bring about the impossibility of rhetoric. In the age of Romanticism, they argue, “the values of ‘authorship’ and ‘individual expression’ came to define the literary domain” (22). In other words, “imaginative discourse became anchored in ‘subjectivity’” (22). What is new about this time period, however, is the way that the CP factors specifically into this schema. Both the objectivism of Raymond Allen and the humanism of Schlesinger called for rhetoric’s exile. In both cases the suppression of rhetoric was a necessary condition to warrant the exclusion of Communists—and anyone

practicing anything that resembled communism—from academic and political life in America.

The impossibility of rhetoric became so important during this time period because the Cold War was an entirely new type of war—ironically, a rhetorical war. Rhetoric was inextricably involved with this war because this war did not require soldiers to enter combat; it required, instead, the enlistment of institutions on an ideological front. In this regard, the very nature of what it meant to be a nation-state was changing. It was not enough to be an American citizen. Citizenship in the early Cold War era meant having faith in the institutions of America. The left had to find ways of unifying with the national purpose during this time or they would be marginalized in the same way as the pacifist minority that failed to enlist in the Second World War. Schlesinger helps the left do this by attacking progressives outright, blaming them for weakening and dividing the political left because they too readily associated with Communists and communist philosophies.

It is difficult to say what would have happened if academic liberals had argued for the belief that we, as American citizens, have a right to hold our own perspectives, whatever they may be, and that the government had no business inquiring into the private lives of law-abiding citizens. Schlesinger firmly argues, given the political climate surrounding him, that “a true progressive movement has no chance of success unless it rigidly excludes Communists” (136), and—depending on how one defines success—he might have been right.

For example, if his definition of success included giving liberals a more comfortable place to stand than a fundamentally leftist position, then the Vital Center formula was successful. If, by success, he meant that liberals would resist violence in both its explicit and clandestine forms, then the Vital Center formula failed. For example, he proposed that what our culture needed was a fundamental reformulation of the terms “right” and “left.” They should be considered as a circle instead of line, as DeWitt C. Poole suggested:



*Figure One: Poole's Reformulation of the Political Sphere*

By using Poole, Schlesinger attempts to unite liberals and conservatives against communists and fascists with respect to liberty. Neither liberals nor conservatives, he suggests, want a violent revolution in America. Both parties believe in the importance of gradual change. This makes the liberal goal of a more equitable distribution of property more palatable in the general Cold War climate. While Schlesinger believes that this diagram provides an “ingenious

solution that reformulates the right-left classification in terms which correspond to the complexities of this ghastly century” (145), he does not interrogate many of the paradoxes that his presentation of the diagram contains.

The first paradox revolves around his hypocritical treatment of nonviolence in his book. He explicitly aligns himself against violence in this formulation, but throughout the book he wages war against progressives, who both believed in and practiced non-violence. In fact, by definition, non-violence is precisely what separates progressivism from communism, but throughout the book Schlesinger not only attacks progressives for their non-violent tendencies but also praises the Communist for being “hard.” By gradualism, then, Schlesinger does not mean non-violence. We can only assume that he means faith in the power of the state to take care of inequities between the rich and the poor.

The function of the state in a democracy, he argues, is to be “the means by which the non-business classes may protect themselves from the business community, if not actually launch a counterattack against long-established bastions of business power” (153). To be fair, he shows an acute awareness that the economic status quo wrought a subtler type of violence on the lower classes, but he believes that gradualism will work because business classes will not resort to violence as Marx predicted they would. Business classes, he implies, are as weak as “doughface” progressives; class conflict, therefore, is essential to freedom. “It is the only barrier against class domination,” (173) he argues, implying that equality between the classes is essentially an unreachable goal. “Yet class conflict, pursued to excess, may well destroy the underlying fabric of

the common principles which sustains free society” (173). The limited state, he believes, will help ensure that this excess is never achieved. His stance, therefore, is quite different than the progressive’s. The progressive hopes to use non-violent means to bring about social change. Schlesinger considers conflict to be what helps ensure that culture will become more equitable in the future. In this sense, while he hopes to see changes, he believes that the machinery is already in place to bring these changes about.

This type of moderation would have appealed to many academic humanists during the early Cold War period, but moderation did little to help Vital Center liberals meet their stated commitments to civil rights and civil liberties. Their own anticommunism served as the major roadblock. This failure is exemplified with another paradox: Schlesinger’s treatment of anticommunist issues in his book. While he argues, for example, against the “usual historical pattern regarding freedoms in America: hysteria, repression, and remorse” (196), he offers little that would keep that same pattern from reemerging in America (as had happened with the Palmer raids earlier in the century). In 1949, he already knew that “the impact of these committees and of their amateur imitators can be seen most clearly in the field of education, which is one of the weakest links in the defense of free discussion” (205), but he fails to present any type of real “radical nerve” as a response.

This failure can be seen particularly well when he addresses the issue of persuasion in the university. “A democracy,” he argues, “in punishing efforts at persuasion punishes itself. But a democracy has the obligation to protect itself

against hostile acts—against ‘substantive evils,’ whether espionage, violence or incitement, and against individuals who contrive these evils” (211). There are not many people in America who would disagree with him on this point, at least in principle, but nowhere in his book does he attempt to outline how a democracy should negotiate the balance between not punishing persuasion and protecting our country against violence.

He even mentions the professors who were fired at the University of Washington, but he never raises the essential question, “Did these professors really intend to commit hostile acts against democracy?” He evades this point by arguing that we “must seek to strengthen administrators in the fight to prevent witch-hunting from spreading any further through the executive branches the black taint of fear which discourages independence of and originality of thought” (217). This is certainly a good idea, but he does not give any suggestions as to how this could or should be done. In fact, he completely undoes his own suggestion by insisting that Vital Center liberals “must just as resolutely reject the curious Doughface doctrine that prosecution of Communists or fellow travelers in any circumstance is a violation of civil liberties” (217). Here again, Schlesinger implies faith that the machinery in place will take care of these matters.

He concludes his argument with an affirmation of the importance of conflict in a democracy. “Conflict is,” he argues, “the guarantee of freedom; it is the instrument of change; it is, above all, the source of discovery, the source of art, the source of love. The choice we face is not between progress with conflict and progress without conflict. The choice is between conflict and stagnation”

(255). In no way, however, does he believe that communist thinkers, or even progressive ones, can contribute to this conflict or help us move forward toward a better goal of equality. Schlesinger finds himself caught up in a third paradox, one he attempts to resolve by arguing: “in a more fundamental sense, does not the center itself represent one extreme? While, at the other, are grouped the forces of corruption—men transformed by pride and power into enemies of humanity” (255). The center, he feels, allows liberals to situate themselves in such a way as to deal with contingencies as they arise.

Radicalism becomes a means instead of an end, a method instead of a position. “The new radicalism,” he argues,

drawing strength from a realistic conception of man, dedicates itself to problems as they come, attacking them in terms which best advance the humane and libertarian values, which best secure the freedom and fulfillment of the individual. It believes in attack—and out of attack will come passionate intensity. (256)<sup>20</sup>

Our explication of Vital Center philosophy shows that at the core of this philosophy is a Romanticist notion of individuality coupled with an Enlightenment faith in reason. At the heart of this is a belief in autonomous subjects, who will stand, individually, against totalitarian forces. This philosophy failed to stand up to totalitarian forces in our own country, however, because it removed scholars from the ethical sphere entirely, allowing them to stand as objective witnesses in the realm of reason. It gave them reasons not to act and

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<sup>20</sup> One wonders if Yeats, whom he invokes here, would have classified him as one of the worst or one of the best in his cosmology.

allowed them to have, instead of a curious faith in the goodness of human nature, an even more curious faith in the natural goodness of the status quo.

***Ad Bellum Purificandum: Transformations of Kenneth Burke***

Kenneth Burke responded to the changing epistemological climate that the Schlesinger and Allen cases describe. In order to see how, we will need to retrace our steps a little and analyze the ways that Burke transformed his rhetorical project during and after WWII. In the fifties, both Kenneth Burke and Malcolm Cowley had difficulties at the University of Washington based on “their political sentiments and affiliations in the 1930s” (Jay 154).<sup>21</sup> This is notable, considering the fact that Burke never joined the Communist Party, which was the basis that the university used to warrant the dismissal of several tenured faculty members. In the mid-thirties Burke wrote to Cowley: “I am a literary man. I can only welcome communism by converting it into my own vocabulary... I am, in the deepest sense, a translator. I go on translating, even if I must translate English into English” (qtd. by Jay 154). In this particular case, Burke was writing about his book Permanence and Change, which he published in 1935, but the process of translating the objectives and tenor of communism into an approach that would be effective in American culture would continue to fuel the writing he did throughout the forties.

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<sup>21</sup> Malcolm Cowley was appointed Walker-Ames lecturer at the University of Washington in 1950, but he found himself surrounded by controversy as soon as he arrived, due to his association with “subversive organizations” (Jay 287) and later because of the supposedly lewd nature of his poetry. In 1952, Kenneth Burke’s was offered a visiting assistant professorship by the English department that was then rescinded by the higher administration.

By the forties, though, Burke was finished with any and all Communist Party and Popular Front associations. He did not, however, rush to renounce earlier associations as many liberals did. In a letter to Malcolm Cowley, dated December 1, 1940 (a time when liberals, because of the Russo-German pact, were still clamoring in the public sphere to separate themselves from the Soviet Union), he exclaims:

God knows, I was sluggish about making the change from aestheticism to the social emphasis. I never did make it completely. At the beginning of it all, I used to say I would never join the Communist Party because, so long as I didn't, they'd never throw me out—and now, at the end of the decade, I might rephrase it by saying that, though never having been hunky-dory with the Party, I now find no occasion to welch. I am grateful to the party for this much: that at a time when I was in pieces, they upheld a program that enabled me to put myself together again. And because of this service, at that time, I simply feel a slight distaste for this whole business of copying-making out of the welching act. I saw enough of their finaglings to be discouraged long ago [...] But I feel that, whatever reservations there are to be made about the whole alliance between art and politics, one should make these at a time, and in a spirit, when they can be made for purposes of *enlightenment*, and not when the writing of such stuff is just one last final bit of the same sort of tactics, angling for positions, etc. (Jay 232)

There is a great deal to admire in this position. Burke was not willing, as many liberals were, to apologize for having once found within communist philosophy reasons to enter the political realm with his literary criticism. As we saw in the last chapter, the rhetorical turn in his aesthetic criticism had been initially fueled by communist objectives, although he was not willing to leave aesthetic appeals behind. This was based on a belief that more attention to aesthetics would have greater persuasive power with an American audience. It must have seemed ironic that scholars all around him were now gravitating to the aesthetic realm because it provided a safe haven in an anticommunist environment.

In this sense, then, we see Burke's philosophical position remaining principled, but this does not mean that he did not adjust his philosophical stance to account for the new cultural conditions that were surrounding him. A Grammar of Motives explicitly stated a new objective: *ad bellum purificandum*, towards purifying war. As most Burkean critics agree:

Burke's 1940s writings were a reaction against formalism in general, and New Criticism in particular. Anticipating by thirty years a post-structuralist account of language, Burke in his Grammar of Motives had already developed insights into how the three fields of signification (Grammar, Rhetoric, and Symbolic)... are intrinsically related and inseparable from each other. (Behr 45)<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For a fuller discussion of arguments as to whether or not Kenneth Burke anticipated post-structuralism see Timothy Crusius's Kenneth Burke and the Conversation After Philosophy.

Burke's theory of dramatism and its corresponding visual representation the pentad, which he developed in Grammar and utilized in Rhetoric of Motives, provided a method that not only explained how human motives are a function of language, but also gave the critic a way of asking better questions in order to create new orientations. They did so by investigating the social and cultural settings of language and the work of art.

Dramatism would provide a way out of some of the problems inherent in his idea of perspective by incongruities. Debra Hawhee explains that "[Burke was often] concerned with crises and the forcing of new orientations, and this sentiment was most strongly manifested in his notion of perspective by incongruity" (134). Like many what we would now call social-epistemic rhetoricians, Burke wanted to "expose language as a deceptive, powerful tool that masquerades as 'truth', thus engendering entire ethical systems" (136). Burke was concerned with "the space where incongruous perspectives clash," noting that "the state of transition is often violent, rife with trauma" (137). He was aware of the ways that language enacted trauma in ethical systems. Burke saw the written word as a place where this violence could be contained instead of being enacted upon human flesh. Burke saw language, in other words, as "a locus for perspective by incongruity, a place where incongruous metaphors can be pushed together to create new ways of viewing the world" (141).

In his middle period, though, Burke linked perspective by incongruity with dramatism. As Stephen Bygrave argues,

the Burke of his middle period will explain and defend his methodology in terms of its holistic possibilities. Irony may become tautology; the end of incongruity is congruity. Burke does privilege his method with an Olympian perspective and does imply a potential for cure as well as merely for diagnosis. (68)

This Olympian perspective distinguishes Burke from many social-epistemic rhetoricians because his project is finally “interpretive, superstructural, and hopeful” (72). Because perspective by incongruity alone has the potential for sinister functions,

Burke moves to ... his own kind of ‘identification’ by which he claims that vice and virtue, normal and abnormal, upwards and downwards, exposition and exhortation can be reconciled, and encompassed within the fuller perspective of... Dramatism. (70)

In light of Bygrave’s argument, we must think of Burke’s philosophy as more than that created in the limited aspects of perspective by incongruities. We must also see Burke’s incongruities within the wider comedic frame created by dramatism. In the Grammar, Burke hoped to use dramatism as a way of purifying war. Therefore, “the Grammar was at peace insofar as it contemplated the paradoxes common to all men, the universal resources of verbal placement” (23).

And though he had not yet written Symbolic of Motives,<sup>23</sup> he knew that

The Symbolic should be at peace, in that the individual substances, or entities, or constituted acts are there considered in their uniqueness, hence

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<sup>23</sup> This book, never entirely finished by Burke, only exists as an incomplete, unpublished manuscript.

outside the realm of conflict. For individual universes, as such, do not compete. Each merely is, being its own self-sufficient realm of discourse. And the Symbolic thus considers each thing as a set of interrelated terms all conspiring to round out their identity as participants in a common substance of meaning. An individual does in actuality compete with other individuals. But within the rules of Symbolic, the individual is treated merely as a self-subsistent unit proclaiming its peculiar nature. It is “at peace,” in that its terms cooperate in modifying one another. Rhetoric 23)

The symbolic realm, then, constitutes the wider frame that Bygrave discusses, but Burke is not naïve about the symbolic realm. He knows that existing *simultaneously* within that frame is conflict, and “insofar as the individual is involved in conflict with other individuals or groups, the study of this same individual would fall under the head of Rhetoric” (23). We remember Burke primarily for his rhetoric, but we should not forget the wider symbolic possibilities in Burke’s philosophy.

For our purposes, it is essential that we understand the frame that Burke was developing for dramatism during this time because it will later help us understand more fully the speech he gave at one of the earliest CCCC conventions, a speech about which very little has been written but which has profound implications for our field. Had the timing been right, this rhetorical perspective could have fueled a better philosophy of first-year composition in the university. But the timing for a Burkean philosophy of composition could not

have been worse. In order to understand why, we must first look more particularly at the general climate of anticommunism and how it was affecting writing in the late forties and early fifties.

### ***Humanism and Objectivism in the Composition Classroom***

As many composition historians have noted, academics in English studies gravitated after the war toward a type of teaching based on New Criticism. Politically speaking, this proved to be quite effective. For both teachers of literature and teachers of composition, it removed the temptations of dealing with political topics in the classroom. After all, “academic humanists in the fifties had special reasons for wanting politics not to exist,” (Ohmann 80). As Richard Ohmann argues:

McCarthy had made activism improvident for college teachers at the start of the decade, and, in any case, the Cold War had reduced ideology to seeming inevitabilities of free world and iron curtain, while drastically narrowing the range of domestic political positions available... (80)

While Ohmann is wrong to blame only McCarthy for this improvidence on the part of teachers to be activists, it was generally true that teachers of literature and those who used literature in their composition classes could use New Criticism as “a rationale for our divorcing work from politics, for lying low in society” (80). On a larger scale, New Criticism provided a convenient means for teachers to divorce their academic careers from political action because New Criticism also helped them define their careers more objectively. As Berlin puts it, the New Critical method

was providing an approach to literature and its teaching that could serve as the basis for the discipline of literary studies. This critical method promised a common professional purpose to unify the diverse factions within the English departments. It was especially appealing because it was politically safe at a time when academics were becoming the objects of witch hunts led by the most powerful political figures in the country.

(Berlin 107)

Berlin argues that this was a time when English Department members “began to protest any method of teaching writing that was not based on the study of literature” (107), but we cannot assume that this was solely because of anticommunism. We have to assume that many people wanted to use literature in their composition classes because they were interested in literature. New Criticism would have given them a more solid argument and confidence for using this method. It was based on seemingly scientific, objective principles. In many ways, then, it related directly to Allen’s injunction that academics could protect the integrity of the university by pursuing an objective truth. This truth would reside in the text, in the work of art as text, separated from the personal and political culture of the author’s life and times.

We can also assume that the threat of domestic anticommunism and the trend toward objectivism that it enacted left little for composition teachers to use in the classroom except literature. There could neither be emphasis, Berlin argues, on creative writing, nor specific rhetorical contexts, nor politics (107-108). This is why Berlin argues that

this call for literature in the writing class was, at least in part, an obvious response to the political climate of the Cold War period, a time when those who called for collective solutions to social problems could be charged with a softness on communism. (109-110)

When we look at it in this light, we can see that New Criticism not only protected English professors from anticommunism, it protected them from the dreariness that composition could become under anticommunism, which was dull and lifeless when student writing by necessity had to be divorced from any political or rhetorical context.

These pressures are unfortunate because they came at a time that was “crucial for writing instruction ... because the pace of change accelerated so dramatically [after the war]” (Russell 239). Conservative critics argued then (as they do now) that progressive education was the reason that poor writers were emerging in our educational system. Nonetheless, “the real culprit,” Russell contends, “was the very success of the economic and educational systems in raising expectations, combined with the old assumption that writing was a single skill, independent of specific contexts” (240). This contention has deeper implications now that we have considered the objectivist pressures that were behind academic responses to domestic anticommunism. The deepest part of the irony lies in the fact that critics attacked universities politically at the same time that they attacked their failure to produce good writers. Like individual teachers, administrators often took the same two courses of action.

For example, at Harvard, administrators devised the “Redbook.” Russell wryly suggests that the Harvard report

might have been titled ‘General Education for the Cold War,’ for... the new experiments were fundamentally conservative in character, stressing the great books and the great ideas of Western civilization as an antidote to the ideological dangers at home and abroad. (252)

Russell reports that the Redbook devoted only two pages specifically to writing instruction and that it insisted on a New Critical method of “close reading and explication devoid of historical or ideological criticism” (253). The faculty at Harvard, however, did not even follow the guidelines set forth in the Red Book itself. Instead, “the faculty concluded that it would be enough simply to expose students to a ‘great mind at work’; questions of what, when, and how students wrote were left to individual instructors, and the writing instruction and grading were left to graduate assistants” (254). This points to the assumption that writing is something completely separate from content and the assumption that epistemology is not socially created, but drawn instead from an empirical reality. It also shows that, in practice, the way that literature was taught in the composition course (at Harvard at least) was often based upon a rather mystical process, instead of on the more measurable objectives that empiricism allows. In other words, the administration called for objectivism, but the literature faculty responded with a formalist pedagogy.

This may help explain why teachers continued to ask after WWII if composition classes should even exist. As Russell argues in “Romantics on

Writing: Liberal Culture and the Abolition of Composition Courses,” “no other subject of study in the university has been so persistently and bitterly attacked” (132) as the composition class. When we consider this opposition, however, through the lens of what we have learned so far about the effects of Cold War conflicts on universities, the opposition to the composition course becomes even more interesting. Russell argues that the elitism that resides in liberal academic culture will always resist the “democratic, vocational, and scientific orientation of the new university” (133). Furthermore, he suggests that, even up to the nineteen fifties, “advocates of liberal culture resisted the encroachments of scientific and professional fields as middle class barbarism, which thwarted liberal culture’s Arnoldian ideal of the ‘well-rounded man’” (133-4). If this is true, we should consider the relationship between the pressures toward objectivism and the humanist/formalist resistance to the scientific and professional orientation of the composition course.

This tension between liberal humanism and objectivism, after all, complicates our argument. In Composition and the University, Sharon Crowley firmly disagrees with Berlin’s association of current-traditional thought with what Berlin calls positivism (and what we call objectivism). “Given that both current-traditional rhetoric and Freshman English were invented and maintained by humanists rather than by scientists and engineers” she quips, “this is an unsatisfactory explanation for its intellectual dominance of the required course” (94). She argues that because “current-traditional rhetoric is not a rhetoric at all,” (94) its primary emphasis is form. Therefore,

current-traditional pedagogy forces students to repeatedly display their use of institutionally sanctioned forms. Failure to master the sanctioned forms signals some sort of character flaw such as laziness or inattention. All of this is fully in keeping with humanism's rejection of rhetoric, as well as its tendency toward idealism, its reverence for institutional and textual authority, and its pedagogical attention to the policing of character. (95)

Crowley is certainly correct to point out the function of formalism within current-traditional thought, but in this study there is no reason that Crowley and Berlin cannot both be right. On the institutional front, universities responded to a growing population of under-prepared students by requiring more composition courses. On one front, objectivist scholars—practicing the language theory of Hayakawa—argued that General Semantics provided the most effective way of teaching composition. Humanists simply responded to this institutional need with formalism, a different, but also anti-rhetorical construct, one that would feed a component of its own belletristic agenda.

Crowley argues that current-traditional rhetoric reached “its institutional high point... during the 1950s, when teachers failed as a matter of policy any student theme displaying more than five current-traditionally defined errors, regardless of quality” (96). As we will see in the next chapter, this practice was at odds with the teaching philosophies of most General Semanticists. Given this, it is hard not to argue that the current-traditional paradigm gave humanist teachers a way of turning their resentments about having to teach a skills-based course to middle class barbarians towards the barbarians themselves. But this rather cynical

argument ignores the way that anticommunism dissuaded teachers from introducing controversial materials into the classroom. Anticommunism would seem to be, at least for the nineteen fifties, the final nail in the coffin of rhetoric. Given this environment, it is understandable why literature professors used New Criticism as a way of trying to turn composition courses into literature courses. Russell points out how literature professors argued that literature could help “produce self-reliant individuals with ‘civilized values,’ who could resist the coercion of anti-democratic forces and safely deal with ‘socially subversive emotions’” (134). In this sense, New Criticism brought together the renewed Cold War emphasis on propaganda analysis with deeply held assumptions about the fundamental character of liberal culture.

As we can see, the composition course faced many contrary tensions in the Cold War era. Composition teachers were charged with a skills-based course, one that was created to fit the needs of a new business class, but one that was also essential to the survival of a growing population of students who had never been to college. Progressives during this time might have applauded this course for its democratic and dialectical potential, but at the same time criticized the objectivist expectation for teaching only narrowly defined “skills.” They may have also argued against the imposition of literature into the realm of composition because the teaching of “great writing” did not conform to the permissive practice of speaking to the individual needs and interest of the students. Humanist liberals, of whom the Vital Center liberals were certainly a part, could have looked down on the course for the way it advanced the agenda of the business class.

Traditional humanists might have shared the progressive interest in dialectic, but would have argued for an emphasis on more literary cultural texts. The formalists amongst them may have been somewhat satisfied teaching literary essay genres to students, even if literature was not allowed in the classroom. We can also assume that objectivists, especially those who were influenced by Hayakawa's Language in Action, were quite happy with the prescribed objectives and generally accepted methods for teaching the first-year composition course.

Whether the course turned out to be objectivist/empirical, formalist/humanist, or permissive/progressive would finally depend as much on the objectives as on the methods of the teacher. The course itself, because of its grounding in rhetoric, had the potential to invite controversial topics into the classroom, which gave the course both progressive and humanist potential. It was generally believed by progressive educators that controversial topics engaged student interests, which led in turn to more effective writing instruction. Also, because of its placement in English departments, the course had the potential to invite literature into the classroom, which gave the course humanist potential, in that it was generally believed by humanist educators that students could learn to write well and more by being exposed to great writing. Our discussion so far leads us to conclude that the progressive potential of the course was effectively suppressed during the early Cold War era due to objectivist administrative pressures and the formalist reaction of humanists against those pressures. This conclusion, however, proves to be too simple. Looking specifically at writing and teaching practices in the early Cold War period, the

next chapter will give us a more complete picture of how these conflicting pressures actually played out.

### III: Humanism, Empiricism, Progressivism, and the Dawn of the Cold War

*“I merely want to look for the lost student, and I don’t know that I have a wraith of a chance of finding him anywhere but in a student-centered class.”*

—Arnold E. Needham, College Composition and Communication 1.3 (1950)

*“The tradition of rhetoric is now some 2,400 years old—one of the longest traditions still represented in the modern curriculum. Teachers of composition today fail to recognize that they and their work are a part of that tradition. If a teacher is to have any perspective on his subject, he must know the tradition that lies behind it, know the place of himself and his time in the tradition, and, through this knowledge, be able to put a proper value on new developments in his subject as they appear.”*

—Albert Kitzhaber, Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900 (University of Washington Dissertation, 1953)

In October 1950, in the first volume of College Composition and Communication, Kenneth Oliver published “The One-legged, Wingless Bird of Freshman English.” This essay, cited by Stephen North as one of the first examples of a writer working in the philosophical-scholarly tradition in the field of composition, brings together progressivism, humanism, and empiricism in a way that helps reintroduce these terms as they were refined and redefined in the early Cold War political and social climate.

Oliver argues that the second meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication had illustrated to him three trends in our field: “The ‘traditional’ formal grammar and composition approach; the General Semantics approach; and the communications approach” (3). The atmosphere of the conference, if we take Oliver at his word, made it clear that “the formalists were regarded simply as hangers-on from a teaching tradition which belonged

strictly to the past” (3). Rudolph Flesch’s keynote address “Let’s Face the Facts about Writing” contended that since “people do not speak and write formally” (3), composition teachers should “put an end to formal language teaching, to teach instead how to read newspapers and to write for them, how to write persuasively, and how to discover the weaknesses in other people’s persuasive writing” (3). The objectives that were stated at the workshop on communication courses—which Oliver had attended—focused likewise on “immediate social purposes” and excluded what Oliver called “cultural uses of language—*i.e.*, the expression of personal human experience via poetry, essay, fiction, or drama” (3). Clearly Oliver was not comfortable with demoting writing in the academy to the more immediate realm of communication.

Expanding from this point, Oliver argues that the General Semanticists at the conference, though their methods were different, shared a similar aim:

Both of these groups tend (whether consciously or not) to teach negatively, *i.e.*, to create a heightened awareness of the dangers involved in non-evaluative acceptance of the written word. Neither puts much emphasis on the development of the capacity to express oneself more effectively, sincerely, or forcefully. There is the danger that they may develop more cynics than intelligently responsive readers. There is also the danger that cynics, given a fuller knowledge of propaganda techniques, may simply put that knowledge to work for cynical and selfish purposes.

(4)

What Oliver responds to here—and why his essay serves as a good departure point for this particular chapter—is the reduction of classically humanist teaching philosophy to mere formalism. Oliver’s case illustrates a different vantage point than we have seen so far in our investigation. While there is a great deal to critique about Oliver’s stance, our explication of his philosophy will show that in the face of the more practically minded semantics and progressively minded communication scholars, Oliver asserts what I read to be an ethical-humanist conception of rhetoric. It may even be possible to argue—later in this dissertation—that humanists like Oliver asserted this conception of rhetoric against the cynical and selfish purposes of McCarthyism.

As a way of starting his essay, Oliver concedes the point to semanticists and communication scholars that the teaching of prescriptive grammar is ineffective, but he concedes this point only to further his own end. Because the metaphor that he uses to do so is as important as its meaning, it is worth describing in detail. “[N]either ‘communicators,’ General Semanticists, nor formalists,” he argues

seems to see the problem [of teaching first-year English] with anything approaching a full awareness of its proportions. It is as though the freshman study of language was a two-legged bird. A few scattered intelligent observers began noticing, some twelve or fifteen years ago that the bird was hopping along awkwardly upon one leg of grammar, and occasionally flapping an ineffective cultural wing. “Look,” they said, “that leg isn’t sound; let’s teach the bird to hop on the other one.” So they

bound up the grammar-leg to keep it out of the way, and made the bird to walk upon the other leg. And incidentally, seeing that the poor freshman-bird could not fly anyway, they also bound its wings. "Now," they confidently exclaimed, "the bird will stay on the ground where he belongs, and will hop along much faster. Also, it may never discover the yen to fly. So much the better; it will be less apt to fall and may hop in a straighter line. (4-5)

Neither the semanticists nor the communicators recognize "the value of any effort to soar into literary flight" (5). This is unfortunate, he explains, because "it is the Homers, Dantes, Cervantes, Shakespeares, Thomas Manns, and the etceteras in their classification who have done most to give us a historical-cultural perspective of human aspirations and the dangers that beset us" (5). This argument is noteworthy, I contend, because it is *more* than an argument for using literature in the composition classroom.<sup>24</sup> It is an argument that uses as its starting point the way literature gives us a historical-cultural perspective of human aspirations. Oliver's final goal, however, is productive. He sees the study of literature as a way of teaching students to express themselves more "effectively, sincerely, or forcefully" (2). In today's parlance, we could say that Oliver wanted to give students a voice.

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<sup>24</sup> In "Fighting Over Freshman English," John Heyda reduces this passage to this type of argument. Heyda contends that Oliver is saying to the semanticist and the communication scholars: "You may have in your corner the latest jargon . . . but we have Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare. Do you really think you can win?" (673) My reading of Oliver suggests that this message does not underlie his argument.

Oliver's conception of literature parallels Kenneth Burke's. He does not see the importance of "great literature" embedded in its formalist beauty, but instead in the way that it gives us an ethical, historical, and cultural perspective. Much as Burke argued that propaganda for communism should contain as full a cultural perspective as possible to be effective in a bourgeois middle class environment, Oliver argues that first-year students must also be exposed to fuller cultural perspectives in the first-year composition classroom *via* literature.

While Oliver is willing to concede to the General Semanticist and the communication scholar that texts with "immediate social purposes" can and should have a function in the composition classroom, (6) he contends that there must be room for literature as well. This is vital in the current cultural climate, he argues, because literature can help students more fully develop their own individual points of view. Apparently, Oliver felt that times were dire enough that his audience would grant him an either-or proposition: "For either Americans will continue to discover and express their own personal, individual experiences, convictions, points of view, regardless of what sways the crowd, or collectivism will strengthen its hold upon both ideas and action" (5). Later in this dissertation we will see that the argument that humanist education is the best defense against collective forces gained considerable ground in the fifties.

Like Becker, Oliver connects his argument particularly to the realm of persuasion: "Persuasion is the art of assimilating points of view. Expression: vigorous, effective, sincere personal expression may lead to that maturity of thought which can prevent persuasion from developing Hitlers and Politburos at

too tragic a rate among us” (5). Oliver’s polemic, of course, is overstated. The idea that *any method* of teaching writing can stop totalitarianism is, at best, naïve. Regardless of how one chooses to define literature, through formalist beauty or through historical/cultural understanding, it is difficult to make a connection between the appreciation of it and measurable social change.

The same argument, of course, can be made about progressive and empirical teaching methods. If we identify ourselves as progressive teachers, we have to face the fact that no matter how well we get our students to interrogate cultural, social and economic inequities in their lives and in the lives of others, no matter how effectively we create alternative models for the use of power in our classrooms, broader social change is more difficult, if not impossible, to measure. Even if our goal is empirical, we have to face the fact that no matter how well we empower our students to discover truths within a limited and definable system, it will be equally difficult to know what effect this technique has on the way that our students reach conclusions in their future writing lives.

But what does this concession offer us in our teaching lives? Does the fact that we must make this concession mean that we should take no action at all? As early as 1932, George S. Counts addressed this question when speaking to the Progressive Education Association. In “Dare the School Build a New Social Order?” he argues that schools should not be squeamish about imposing its progressive agenda on students:

If [teachers] could increase sufficiently their stock of courage, intelligence, and vision, [they] might become a social force of some

magnitude... Through powerful organizations they might at least reach the public conscience and come to exercise a larger measure of control over the schools than hitherto. They would then have to assume some responsibility for the more fundamental forms of imposition which, according to my argument, cannot be avoided. (188)

These impositions, he argues, should “grow out of the social situation” (190). Arguing that progressive education should not be content with focusing on the nature of the child alone, he contends that progressive education should “give to our children a vision of the possibilities which lie ahead and endeavor to enlist their loyalties and enthusiasm in the realization of the vision” (192). Counts could not have known at this time how great the pressures to make concessions to the political climate would become. In the Cold War climate, it would have been courageous indeed to stand up for a progressive vision of society, but it may have also been courageous to stand up for a humanist or a radically empirical one as well.

Chapter I showed us that the objectivist forces underlying Red Scare politics were already well in place before WWII. While some radicals were trying to enact a progressive vision in the social, political, and academic realm, most gravitated toward having faith in “the superior virtues of persuasion.” Chapter II showed how effectively Red Scare politics created a stifling environment for academics who wanted to employ the best of progressive, and even humanist philosophies in their classrooms. The type of objectivism we saw in Raymond B. Allen’s argument for firing tenured professors at the University of

Washington placed considerable pressures on academics toward conformity. While liberal anticommunism gave humanists a way of resisting these pressures by using rugged individualism against all types of social conformity, objectivist pressures often reduced humanism to formalism as well. This chapter will continue to explain, but even more precisely, how the best of humanist, progressive, and empirical teaching philosophies were circumscribed in the composition classroom by the Cold War climate.

Oliver's case proves to be a good place to begin because, though I have reservations about introducing literature into the composition classroom,<sup>25</sup> I think that underlying his polemic is an assumption that teachers must be free to use the best elements of humanism, empiricism, and progressivism in first-year composition. Oliver argued for a conception of composition that would focus more on what students want to say and how they can say it more sincerely, effectively, or forcefully. He also argued for a broader conception of literature in the face of epistemological assumptions that reduced his humanist-based teaching philosophy to formalism. Although we do not have enough information about Oliver's classes to know whether or not his argument was based on the individual and dynamic needs of his students, I believe that his attempts to broaden our

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<sup>25</sup> In the composition classroom, the use of literature can often become an end in itself, detracting from the writing process of students. Texts with "immediate social purposes," if not connected to the type of academic writing that students need to learn in the first-year composition classroom, are also dangerous in this regard. This assumes, of course, that first-year composition has to introduce students to academic discourse. I will address this assumption more thoroughly in the conclusion to this work.

conceptions of literature to include its relationship to culture is commendable, as is his focus on “voice.”

When any part of the relationship between humanism, empiricism, and progressivism gets circumscribed, writing instruction suffers. An important part of proving, then, that the Cold War had damaging effects on writing instruction, is to show more specifically how parts of this equation were repressed during the Cold War era. I have been careful in this study not to take any shortcuts when trying to prove that the Cold War atmosphere had damaging effects on our field. These shortcuts could include 1) over-generalizing from singular cases or experiences, personal experience, or hearsay about writing instruction in the early Cold War period, and 2) over-generalizing about writing instruction practices in the early fifties by relying too heavily on an interpretation of textbook ideology. Just because these two methods are shortcuts, however, does not mean that a fuller description of these shortcuts will tell us nothing. In fact, a combination of singular cases, personal experience, and an analysis of textbooks will prove to be the best place from which to begin our descriptions.

It is safe to assume, for example, that the Cold War atmosphere just described above helped to fuel the popularity of Brooks and Warren’s Modern Rhetoric (1949) text, as well as McCrimmon’s newly written Writing with a Purpose (1950). Not only did Brooks and Warren’s text contain articles promoting Vital Center philosophy, as discussed in the last chapter, their emphasis on the modes gave humanists a way of conceding to the Cold War political climate and focus, if not on teaching literature, then on teaching formal

genres in the composition classroom. The teaching of genres, as Crowley argues in Composition in the University, appealed to some humanists, at least as a concession for having to teach a skills-based course (94). Modern Rhetoric would have also appealed to some extent to empiricists who wanted to focus primarily on logic in the classroom. For Brooks and Warren, language is “first, a means of communication and second, a means of thinking” (6):

Writing things out, which will be the main business of this course, is simply a more rigorous way of talking things out. It is a way of training the mind in logical thought. For one thing, in writing we must understand the structure of language, what the parts of speech do, how words relate to one another, what individual words mean, the rules of grammar and punctuation. For another thing, we must understand the principles of organizing a discourse; that is, how to go about explaining something, how to argue a point, how to tell about an event. Once we start putting into words an explanation—or an argument or an account of an event—we have to organize the material in a way that will be readily understood by others. (7)

This formal approach to rhetoric focuses very little on invention, on the way that texts get written. It emphasizes the modes of discourse—exposition, description, narration, and argument—allowing rhetorical principles to reside primarily in a subject’s mind instead of being embedded in culture. The essays and readings in Modern Rhetoric, on the other hand, *were* embedded in Cold-War culture, but, as I showed in the previous chapter, they were reactions *against* progressive,

socialist, and communist elements of the left. They provided only the illusion of dialectic, containing primarily centrist philosophies, providing a body of material for students to read that was only marginally oppositional.

In the interest of fairness to Brooks and Warren's text, I should say that it mentions, at least, two issues that would have been important to humanists, progressives, and empiricists alike. Addressing one of the most terrifying developments of the Cold War period, they write:

With the development of the atomic bomb, physicists suddenly saw that physics had to be thought of in relation to the whole society, in relation to the survival of the race. Some physicists took the position that they would do no research directed toward military use; some took the opposite stand; but both groups were forced into thinking about their relation to the world outside physics, and many of them felt compelled to express their thoughts in letters and articles. (5)

They also address the importance of relating business to ethics:

More and more, the businessman, big or little, sees that business is not a mere matter of supply and demand, profit and loss. It has enormously complicated relations to the whole of the society in which it is exercised—from the management of the Community Chest to the conduct of national foreign policy. And in dealing with the relation of business to society in general, the businessman who is businessman and nothing more, who happens to have an aptitude for making money or building up a great organization, may be a baby, even a dangerous and destructive baby. (5)

Taken together, these quotes imply that writing and rhetoric are—and should be—connected to broader culture. Brooks and Warren voice concerns about the relationship between an emerging scientific field that can bring about world destruction or—from the perspective of the physicist who decides nuclear research is necessary—peace through the threat of mutually assured destruction. They also show concern about the rising power of big business—corporations that threaten to undermine the fabric of common decency and democracy. The book, however, makes no attempt to engage students directly with these concerns and this distinguishes the book from more progressive writing philosophies. Brooks and Warren argue the following:

The most important use of language, no matter how specialized the user's occupation, is in his personal life. A man lives with a family, with friends, with neighbors, with fellow church members, with people on civic or political committees, with the stranger on the street. He needs to understand these people, to express himself to them, and to think about his relation to them. So here we are back to language as, first a means of communication and second, a means of thinking. We are once again talking about language as one way of learning how to live. (6)

This privileging of writing in one's personal life as the most important use of language would put Brooks and Warren's text in the humanist category, if it showed more concern with self-expression and personal growth throughout. The overall emphasis of the text, however, is formalist because of the heavy reliance on the modes.

McCrimmon's Writing with a Purpose (1950), on the other hand, de-emphasizes the modes. Argument is the only mode that gets addressed specifically as a genre in the book, and this is only because argument "requires some attention to analysis of issues and to the evaluation of authorities, evidence, and reasoning, as well as to techniques of composition" (xi). Instead of using the modes, McCrimmon uses "purpose" to organize his text. He introduces the book with a rhetorical claim:

All effective writing is controlled by the writer's purpose. Except possibly when making a memorandum for himself, a writer is always addressing a reader. He is trying to do something to those readers: to inform or convince or delight them, to explain something to them, or to make them see or feel what he has experienced. Each of these general purposes will exert its own influence on the selection and presentation of his material.

(3)

This approach, of course, is significantly different than the humanist focus on genre and self-expression. Purpose is directly connected to readers in McCrimmon's philosophy to readers. It is therefore more audience-based than Brooks and Warren's text and is, in this way, more connected to the broader social and cultural sphere.

In another way it remains disconnected from the ethical sphere because it focuses on purpose alone—without interrogating the ethical implications of those particular purposes. Influenced by the semantic theories of Hayakawa, McCrimmon's Writing with a Purpose would have appealed to objectivist-minded

writing teachers to an even greater extent than Modern Rhetoric. Like Hayakawa, McCrimmon teaches students to distinguish between statements of facts and judgments. He teaches students to learn to slant description in both directions in order to give a balanced impression, another Hayakawan technique. He also emphasizes the importance of purposeful details, and clear and effective prose—favoring economy of expression and the omission of “useless words.” Despite these similarities, and McCrimmon’s statement that Hayakawa influenced his work, he does not argue, as Hayakawa does, that reports are “the highest form of persuasion” and that “judgments stop thought.” His book is not, therefore, entirely objectivist in its orientation.

But it is difficult to say exactly what epistemology, if not objectivism, his book falls into. Purpose, after all, is important to all forms of writing instruction, whether it be humanist, empirical, or progressive; so the degree to which McCrimmon’s book could be considered outside the realm of objectivism would depend upon what topics he emphasizes and encourages students to take up in the book itself. Generally speaking, his assignments fail to move students into critical literacy. Examples of purposes that students are invited to take up include: praising the mayor of a small town, describing a room, explaining the time-lag between the onset of a rain storm and the flooding of the rivers. In terms of choosing a subject, students are encouraged to write about family, friends, and neighborhood; hobbies and recreation; hopes and ambitions relating to college, marriage, and career; fears and personal prejudices. They are also encouraged to write about their own knowledge and things they already know how to do.

The section dealing with argument, however, would have appealed to progressive teachers. In one section, McCrimmon asks students to elaborate “the thesis that leading’s one’s own life in America requires more social courage than most of us have.” In another section, dealing with opinion and belief, he asks students to consider such questions as “How democratic is the United States?” “Is capitalism efficient?” “Should colleges be propagandists for democracy?” “Have we lived up to the Constitution?” and to argue “The case for or against strikes.” But a vast majority of the book, and all of the essays included as “samples” in the text are either personal essays or technical ones.

This does not mean, of course, that a progressive minded teacher would have had no use for this text. One of the central tenets of progressive pedagogy is that students should start with their own interests and experiences and move these experiences into dialectic with the cultural realm. We can safely assume, however, that if teachers wanted to engage students with more controversial materials, she or he would have done so through other means than the textbook alone.

Generally speaking, we can see that Brooks and Warren’s approach is a humanist-rhetorical approach, while McCrimmon’s is primarily an empirical-rhetorical approach to the teaching of composition. Does this actually tell us, though, that the first-year composition course was always a humanist or empirical enterprise in the early Cold War period? The absence of a progressive educational textbook in the early Cold War period is notable, but not really that surprising in a primarily market-driven educational economy. Does the absence

of progressively oriented textbooks prove that progressive education fell completely out of favor in the early Cold War period? We cannot make that assumption based on textbooks alone. Looking at textbooks only tells us a little about what fifties classrooms were actually like. After all: how many of us today would want the content of our courses judged, fifty years from now, on what textbooks we used in our classes?

This project will proceed with the assumption that while analysis of textbooks can tell us something, there are more effective methods for finding out what happened in fifties classrooms. These are:

1. Surveying and interviewing people who taught and who took composition and communication courses in the fifties;
2. Looking more carefully at written assignments in historical archives; and
3. Analyzing journals from our field and extrapolating from this analysis the objectives and methods of first-year composition teachers.

A combination of these three methods, in conjunction with what scholars have already said about writing instruction during the fifties, could give us a much fuller picture of what effects the Cold War played on our field. Unfortunately, the type of ethnographic research required for the first two methods is beyond the scope of this particular study. This dissertation, therefore, will focus primarily on the third method as a way of laying groundwork for further study in our field.

If we believe what composition historians have said about composition classrooms in the fifties, it seems that classrooms were not only current-

traditional, they were extremely authoritarian enterprises. Sharon Crowley contends that the post-war period was particularly bleak, arguing that composition “was quite possibly at its lowest institutional ebb ever” (103). Generally speaking, she may be right; only a few articles in College English in the early fifties focus on the use of revision; a more contextualized, student-friendly teaching of grammar; and the importance of introducing multiple viewpoints in argument classes to more fully reflect the life-experience of students (and the majority of these would be written by none other than Ken Macrorie, who would change the way we think about composition in the sixties). For the most part, as we will see, teachers and scholars in the fifties reacted against the assumptions of progressive education, particularly “life adjustment” curriculums that argued that social development was the most important element of education. The overall picture, however, that Berlin, Crowley, Russell and others have given us of Cold War classrooms is incomplete—if not incorrect—and many composition historians have been working to give us a fuller picture of what mid-twentieth century classrooms were actually like.

### ***Authoritarianism from Coast to Coast: Two Cases***

Mara Holt shows us in a very specific way that classrooms in the fifties were more authoritarian than they were in the thirties. The case of the “Oregon Plan” is particularly compelling because it shows us that even an issue like collaborative activity—one of the hallmarks of progressive education—became more authoritarian in the fifties composition classroom. While collaborative activities were meant to promote more equality in the classroom during the

nineteen thirties, they changed radically after the war. Focusing on Charlton Laird's controversial "Oregon Plan" for teaching first-year composition, Holt argues that collaborative practices during the fifties "promoted competition in the name of individualism" (541). Indeed, Laird's plan, when we look back at it, seems to be both objectivist and antagonistic.

In Laird's classroom, students read each other's drafts, but solely and explicitly for the purpose of correcting mechanical errors. Peer group interaction was secondary to the textbook and the teacher—the primary authorities in the classroom. "In the 1930s," Holt contends,

knowledge was described by the teacher as something to be attained by people interacting; group work was a logical extension of this view of knowledge. In the 1950s, on the other hand, subject matter was invested with the power of knowledge, and in the classroom, the teacher was its authority. (542)

Discerning an overwhelming emphasis on the teacher and the text as authorities, one may wonder why a teacher would utilize group work in the classroom at all. The answer to this question is simple. As many composition historians have pointed out, workloads were becoming too great for composition teachers to handle. In the early Cold War period, Laird argued that composition teachers could use collaborative activity to help "speed up the process of correcting papers" (541).

Generally speaking, Holt's argument about the function of group work in the fifties supports the idea that the Cold War climate made composition classrooms more authoritarian:

In the wake of Nazism, Stalinism, World War II, and the consolidation of an objective view of knowledge, the group was no longer seen as a resource for the individual as it had been throughout most of the 1930s; it was now a veiled threat. Whereas in the 1930s class the goal was successful group process, in Laird's 1950s classroom, the goal was discovering the weaknesses of the individual. Each student was held "personally responsible for any ineptitudes that remain undetected in the group, for any weakness not already observed." (544)

Holt goes on to say that "Laird proudly described the relationship among his students as adversarial" (544). When we combine Laird's emphasis on finding a correcting weakness and corruptibility in students with his emphasis on adversarial combat, we can see that his epistemological assumptions reflect those of Vital Center liberalism. In The Vital Center, Schlesinger repeatedly asserts that conflict helps keep the weakness and corruptibility of human beings in check. Laird's classroom reflects this assertion in microcosm: an adversarial environment in the classroom, Laird assumes, helps weed out weakness and corruptibility in the language of students.

Another study that centers on the issue of authority in the classroom is Robin Varnum's study of "The Baird Era" at Amherst. It reflects the same type of authoritarian practices that Holt describes, but in a different light. Where Laird

focused on weak language, Baird focused on weak thinking. Varnum's study ties Baird's epistemology to his political context: "His pedagogy seems to have been modeled on combat and reflects American culture during the war years and the period of the Cold War" (3). Baird's course at Amherst was explicitly designed to disorient students. Though Baird's motive for this type of disorientation was to force students to confront the chaos of their lives so that they could learn to order it, many of the teachers of the course felt that it was "an authoritarian enterprise" (38). One teacher looking back at the course went so far as to say that

the political and social climate of the 1950s allowed for considerable abuse of students by teachers. Students were subjected to very aggressive criticism, or to something almost like basic training. But that is only one metaphor for an experience which could also be called "initiation." (147-148)

Though some teachers of the course suggested that the course "sought to instill within the student himself a sense of his own authority over language," (155) students looked at it a little differently. Looking back, one student said, "'It's brutalizing, and the only time it works is if the culture at large supports this sort of stuff, and Amherst 'men' in those days were supposed to survive that'" (192). Varnum's study makes it clear that the reason that *Amherstmen* were supposed to survive this type of training was that they were being primed for becoming leaders of society. The type of authoritarianism that we see in the Amherst case is, therefore, very different than what we see in the Oregon case. In both the Baird and the Laird cases, though, we find support for the thesis that writing

classrooms in the fifties were more authoritarian than they were in the Progressive Era. The Laird case shows us the authoritarianism underlying objectivist philosophy; the Baird case shows us the authoritarianism underlying a certain type of humanist philosophy. Both reflected the need for antagonistic environments for learning.

If this were true of all our cases, we could more easily assume that composition theory took a more authoritarian turn and circumscribed progressive philosophy altogether, that language came to reflect objective (in the case of Laird) and subjective (in the case of Baird) authorities. Then it would be easy to accept the notion that these three legs of the composition table were circumscribed and the Cold War atmosphere hampered writing teachers' abilities to be effective and ethical in the classroom. But there is an enormous amount of evidence that some composition and communication teachers operated from very different assumptions than we see in these two cases. A thorough investigation of the first issues of College Composition and Communication reveals this evidence. These documents give us a much more complicated picture of writing instruction in the early Cold War period. Understanding what happened there will give us a deeper understanding of what happened to progressivism, humanism, and empiricism in the early Cold War era.

### ***A Kinder, Gentler Conference: The Early Days of CCCC***

By investigating more fully the early issues of CCC, we can see that not all classrooms were authoritarian in the early Cold War era. The early issues of CCC give us particular descriptions of the objectives and methods of first-year

composition and communications courses. They also show us a more complicated picture of Cold War writing instruction than scholars of composition have given us so far. For example, the workshop reports of the Conference on College Composition and Communication prove that the scholars who were engaged in the professional development of our field did *not* work from current-traditional assumptions about language production, even during the height of anticommunism in America. The reports also prove that while scholars were primarily concerned with composition as a course, they were engaged in producing a viable theory of composition as well.

A closer investigation of the early issues of CCC also troubles Maureen Daly Goggin's assertion that the early editors of CCC "published (and thus, encouraged) mainly practical, service-oriented essays that were largely based on an author's personal experience in a specific and local program" (328). While there is some truth to this, our investigation shows that teachers were also actively engaged in developing a workable philosophy of first-year composition. As Chas R. Roberts argues in his "Foreword to Workshop Reports of the 1950 Conference on College Composition and Communication," "some ideas run like a refrain through reports from groups working ostensibly on quite different topics. It is in these that we may detect a philosophy of freshman English emerging" (3). In this section, I hope to do what Roberts did not do, to expand on some of these common themes as they emerge in the different reports from 1950. This expansion will help show how the ideals that were put forth at the conference would have become difficult to put into practice in the Cold War climate.

We should make several qualifications before we expand on this philosophy. First, we cannot assume that the philosophy that gets developed in these reports is a homogenous one. Just because many of the ideas that emerge in the reports overturn the assumption that *all* writing instruction was based on current-traditional rhetoric, this does not mean that current-traditional rhetoric was not still practiced, or even that it was not the dominant mode of instruction. In fact, residual elements of current-traditional rhetoric can be found in the reports themselves, but the continuing emergence of social-epistemic rhetoric also exists there. We can safely assume that teachers who were engaged in “the most extensive and concerted frontal attack ever made on the problems of teaching college freshman English” (3) were trying to find new ways to teach first-year composition effectively and ethically. While the objectives and methods vary in each report, all the reports generally assume that composition and communication instructors should be in the business of teaching spoken and written discourse to students in whatever way is most helpful to the learning process of students. While teacher concerns are present in the reports, they are always presented as secondary concerns, acknowledging the fact that student performance declines when teachers are overexerted. The differences that emerge, therefore, revolve around definitions of effective discourse and by what means effective discourse can be achieved. We can discern differences between different reports, especially (as our opening anecdote helped to illustrate) as they are divided between composition and communication camps.

The writers of the “Function of the Composition Course in General Education,” for example, argue that a composition course should be organized around the following objectives:

1. To cultivate the ability to think logically.
2. To cultivate respect for human worth despite accidents of class, color, culture, or other divisive circumstances.
3. To develop taste.
4. To develop the ability to discipline emotions and to arrive at reasonable judgments.
5. To develop intellectual competence.
6. To cultivate a belief in the necessity for ethical behavior. (5)

As we can see, some of these objectives are clearly outside the realm of current-traditional rhetoric. While the first objective favors logic and the fourth (by implying without qualification that emotions need to be “disciplined”) devalues emotion, the second and six objectives deal directly with ethics—issues of race, class, culture and other divisive circumstances (gender?) and the necessity for ethical behavior.

Other composition reports add new objectives to our list, ones that we would find amenable to composition studies today. For example, in one report, compositionists assert an audience-centered claim, that “the objective of the course as defined is to develop in the freshman the power of clearly communicating facts or ideas in writing to a specified reader or group of readers” (9). Likewise, the idea that “the student should have something to say, and should

be able to communicate it clearly and effectively to any one of a variety of purposes” (11) shows that not only did teachers care about what students had to say, they also thought about how what students had to say related to why they wanted to say it.

Not only are the objectives for the composition course contextually bound by student needs, the objectives for communications courses are even more connected to the social realm. The communication theorists at the conference state that they hope to achieve the following objectives:

1. To teach the student that language is a form of behavior and the principle manifestation of personality.
2. To teach the student that language is symbolic and that communication involves verbal symbols, gestures, and tones of voice.
3. To teach the student to observe, analyze, and classify forms and means of communication in relation to the social context in which they occur.
4. To train the student to distinguish between report of sense, or mathematical data, and emotional language in his own and others' communication.
5. To develop in the student an ability to discriminate among the various areas of speech and writing.
6. To develop in the student the ability to adapt his communication means to the social context in order to procure the intended effect upon his reader or auditor.

7. To train the student to focus his attention on the speaker and not allow himself to be deflected from the speaker's meaning by his own emotions and associations.
8. To train the student to be sensitive to, and to use, emotive devices such as metaphors, rhythmic patterns, and imagery in communication. (17-18)

As we can see, communication scholars seem to be more aware of the fact that logic does not have to be the first priority in the teaching of rhetorical principles. Logos in this schema is balanced particularly well against pathos (audience emotion and values) and ethos (character as suggested by personality). This may be because communication courses, by nature of their dual emphasis on reading/writing and listening/speaking, require students to think more socially about communication. The writers of additional reports about the communication course also include goals about citizenship. Some teachers want "to develop students' abilities to give and receive meaning conveyed in *language*, to the further end that they become effective and alert members of a democratic society" (15).

What happens then if, taking our cue from Roberts, we combine the objectives of both disciplines, not to ignore the differences between them, but to assert a consensual theory of composition against which we can compare the political climate and its pressures? We can see, looking back, that composition and communication scholars wanted students to be able to present logical and organized arguments, but both communication and composition scholars

acknowledged, in some way, that these concepts had to be connected to social contexts. Both camps wanted students to be able to distinguish between the different appeals, knowing whether someone is trying to appeal to reason, emotion, or values. If we extend the concept of taste to include understanding one's rhetorical situation, then we can say that both the compositionists and the communication theorists wanted students to present a credible ethos. If we assume that citizenship and ethical behavior are closely connected, then we can assume that making good citizens was an important objective to both camps as well.<sup>26</sup>

It is well worth discussing, before we explain why these objectives would have been difficult to achieve in a Cold War climate, the ways in which composition and communication scholars hoped to reach their individual objectives. The methods these scholars proposed are worth noting because they are far from the objectivist, current-traditional methods that many composition

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<sup>26</sup> Because of the importance of science at the time, scholars present at the conference felt that the role of Engineering and Science sections of composition was important enough to warrant its own set of objectives. These too have interesting implications:

1. To give students an opportunity to master "fundamentals" of English (agreement, clear reference, meaningful punctuation, etc.)
  2. To foster constructive attitude toward communication: expression is a part of any course and a necessary function of the citizen. Contrary attitudes are often fostered by technical specialists and the college administration often misdirects student attitude by emphasizing specialized learning
  3. Generally: to develop a well-rounded citizen in a democratic society; especially: to develop disciplined, flexible minds; more especially, for engineers: to develop technological attitudes of benefit to society.
  4. To develop skill in the basic methods of engineering; English composition is more useful for this purpose than any other basic course
  5. To relate the discipline of imaginative literature to that of engineering.
- (35-36)

scholars impose on this decade. First, there seems to be a consensus in the workshops against prescriptive grammar. Teachers felt that grammar should not be taught as an “end in itself” (19) and that it should only be employed for students to be able to reach the goals of the course. “Grammar will be used wherever it will contribute to either effectiveness or decency, and never when not related to these aims” (20). At this time in our history, some institutions were dropping all formal teaching of grammar and “subsisting theme writing with conferences to explain errors” (20).

Semanticists, of course, focused a great deal on the semantic method. They believed that “semantics is a fundamental and necessary part of all courses in composition and communication” (22). They argued against traditional vocabulary building, against the use of imposed visions of literary taste, and against the teaching of abstract grammatical principles. They affirmed instead the idea that teachers should lead students toward self-directed learning methods and toward more active reading processes, processes that include teaching students how to progress from lower levels of abstraction to the higher levels of abstraction in the composition class.

Communication scholars employed even more progressive teaching methods. Emphasizing collaborative methods to reach their objectives, communication scholars suggested that teachers should “encourage group projects rather than teacher domination” (7). Discussions about methods generally focused on ways of engaging students in “conversation, group discussion, extemporaneous speaking of different varieties, oral reading of informational

materials,” (15) as well as practicing “the fundamentals of parliamentary procedure” (15). More specifically, they offered the following suggestions:

1. Make as much use as possible of student leaders and chairmen in actual running of the class.
2. Use student leaders selected from each section to meet with the staff and assist in planning course projects.
3. Have a planning committee select materials from current publications to serve as a basis for class discussions and for further investigation leading to student writing and speaking.
4. Get students started talking first, leading into writing from the class discussions.
5. Have each section select its best speakers by student ballot and allow them to speak occasionally before an assembly of the entire communication group. Have best pieces of writing selected by a student committee and published or mimeographed and circulated among the students.
6. Have student panels with a student leader to discuss assigned text material—a good way to work in practice in speaking without seeming to have a burdensome load of extra speech assignments.
7. Use drill sessions as opportunities to stimulate student discussion.
8. Draw all materials from sources closely related to student interests and needs. (17-18)

These are primarily student-centered methods of teaching, working with Dewey's educational theories or what Hillocks would now call a constructivist teaching philosophy.<sup>27</sup>

When we take them as a whole, we can clearly see that these methods are far from current-traditional, even those of the semanticists, who often get equated in our literature with current-traditional teaching. Generally speaking, the meeting of CCCC in 1950 shows great potential for conversation between the disciplines. Despite Oliver's assertions that humanism got devalued at the conference, the objectives that were stated on the composition side of the equation spoke both to the social concept of taste and to the ethics involved in race, class, and other divisive circumstances. This concern is far from formalist and is remarkably relevant to composition studies today. Elements of progressivism, empiricism, and humanism, our description shows, were in conversation with each other during this stage of our development. While their close proximity may have led to more conflict, this conflict most likely led to more generative potential in our field. This potential, however, would remain precisely that—just potential. To understand why, we must investigate more carefully the tensions between composition and communication courses as they relate to the Cold War epistemological climate.

### ***Sailing Only Three: The Missing C in CCCC***

In "Freshman English, Composition and CCCC," David Bartholomae argues that there were two pressures that led to the formation of the Conference

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<sup>27</sup> See Hillocks's Ways of Thinking, Ways of Teaching and Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice for definitions and discussions of constructivism.

on Composition and Communication in 1949. The first pressure, Bartholomae argues, was a result of the tension between literature and composition in the field of English. “Against literature,” he argues, “freshman English asserted itself as composition” (41). The second pressure, he continues,

was the pressure of numbers—the numbers of students, many of them GI’s, swelling colleges and universities after the war, placing dramatic and unprecedented demands on introductory courses (courses they were said to be ‘unprepared to take’) and requiring the creation of a new faculty to do a teaching for which their English PhD’s had not prepared them. (41)

Bartholomae also gives us this insight into our history:

Since the 1940s there has been a continuing struggle to displace the old humanism—with its entrenched theories of knowledge, culture and pedagogy—and to replace the English of the senior professors with a new English. The opposing term for composition, then, is not literature but a version of literary study threatened not only by composition but by other critical movements in the discipline: women’s studies, black studies, film studies, gay studies, critical theory, culture study, studies of working-class language and literature, pedagogy. CCCC provided a site where English was open for negotiation (or renegotiation). (42)

Bartholomae argues that the opening talks at CCCC, given by Richard Weaver and James McCrimmon in 1949, provide our first outline for this debate. These are fundamentally between two rival epistemologies: “Language as an abstraction; language as a practice” (44). While the more conservative Richard

Weaver “argued that a proper education in language can lead to a unified culture, a refined moral sensibility, and a perception of eternal truths beyond language,” (43) McCrimmon’s argument was “based on the idea that linguistic difference should be the new ground for language theory” (43). Because we will expand on Weaver’s rhetorical idealism later in this chapter, it will be well for us now to focus more on McCrimmon’s pragmatics. “The early work of Hayakawa and Korzybski,” Bartholomae reports,

enabled McCrimmon to imagine that the notion of a proper meaning, like the notion of a proper utterance, was available to systemic critique. If there was no necessary relationship between words and things, then there were no absolute meanings. Meaning must somehow be negotiated—and that, the ways meanings and languages are negotiated individually and collectively, was what CCCC was prepared to take as its subject. (44)

While there is much to admire about Bartholomae’s delineation, this project’s explication of humanism, empiricism, and progressivism suggests that more than two currents ran through the formation of our discipline.

While Bartholomae wants to boil down the debate of CCC to “Language as an abstraction, language as practice” (44), a closer investigation of the early issues of CCC will show that debates over early Cold War language theory are far more complicated. Our previous investigation of the strains of humanism, empiricism, and progressivism begs the question, what happened to progressivism? This question can be answered best by looking more specifically at the broader political and academic culture at this time.

By March 1950, the time of the second meeting of CCCC, anticommunism was center-stage in American culture. The Korean War was under way, Alger Hiss was on trial, and McCarthy had already made his now infamous speech in Wheeling, West Virginia. As many historians have explained, the version of the speech that was recorded in the Congressional Record claimed that the State Department was harboring 57 subversives. “I have in my hand,” McCarthy claims, “fifty-seven cases of individuals who would appear to be either card carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party, but who nevertheless are still helping to shape our foreign policy” (212). Reporters claimed that he had in fact said 205. In a speech in Denver the following day, McCarthy changed the number to 207. (Schrecker, Age of McCarthyism 63). Of course, McCarthy had no list; he was speculating instead: “McCarthy got the number 205 from a 1946 letter of then Secretary of State James F. Brynes, who said that 79 of 285 security risks in his agency had been ‘separated.’ Simple but faulty math led McCarthy to 205” (Richard Fried 123). In fact, McCarthy had practically no knowledge of communism at all.

He once dumbfounded his mentors by professing ignorance of Earl Browder, former head of the CP. One tutor recalled that Joe ‘didn’t know a Communist from a street cleaner.’ He absorbed the lore quickly, but his hasty preparation often betrayed him, disturbed those whose tips he abused, and encouraged foes to see in him an easy target. (Richard Fried 121)

While he may have seemed an easy target, he was not someone with whom many people wanted to tangle. Like most countersubversives, he was not going to use the realm of reason to argue, and having to talk to McCarthy or any of his henchmen, as we saw in the University of Washington case, meant that further repercussions were soon to follow, ones that would be out of the media spotlight but that could result in the loss of a job.

This may be why academic journals were fairly quiet on the subject of communism and anticommunism in the early fifties. There are no articles explicitly about communism or anticommunism in the early issues of CCC, but there were other tensions running through the early issues of CCC that relate directly to conflicts between progressivism, humanism, and empiricism. These factors create for us an even more complex picture of our field than Bartholomae shows us. Bartholomae argues that composition studies came to see itself as separate organization against both internal and external forces: *i.e.*, against 1) the pressure of more prestigious literature courses and against 2) the increasing pressure of a growing population of students. John Heyda adds—quite convincingly—a third reason.

Composition studies, Heyda argues, had to defend itself against 3) the popularity of the communication course. Using Bartholomae's two explanations for why CCCC formed as his starting point, he states:

If we add a third explanation... that a separate body had to be formed to contend with the challenge to first-year English posed by the emergence of communications in the 30s and 40s, we get a somewhat more disquieting

picture of CCCC's formation. This picture becomes especially troubling upon close inspection of the early years of the new organization's new journal, College Composition and Communication. (665)

Here, I concur with Heyda's assertion, but find it necessary to interrogate this conflict more extensively. Heyda states that the early Cold War period was a time when both composition and communication "had claims... to large chunks of a vast but unstable expanse of academic real estate reserved for first-year literacy courses, and wrangling over these claims was due to take center stage" (665). Composition studies would eventually look toward the prestige of humanism in order to assert itself against the more popular communication courses.

For example, in an early CCC article, Albert Walker contends that the same question is put to him every year at the conference: "Are you a COMMUNICATIONS MAN or a COMPOSITION MAN?" (3, emphasis his)—a question to which he "shuffles his feet" (3). Like Oliver, Walker notes that compositionists are generally considered "bad" and communication scholars are generally considered "good" by conference attendees. While there is no way of knowing whether this perception was valid or if it was fed by a sense of defensiveness on the part of compositionists, we should look more specifically at these terms so that we can more fully understand how this tension relates to humanism, empiricism, and progressivism.

***Are You Now or Have You Ever Been a 'Communications Scholar'?***

Generally speaking, a survey of the first four years of CCC (1950-1954) shows that communication courses were more progressive than composition

courses, at least in terms of educational theory. If communication courses were ever in line with progressive politics, however, they were not explicitly so by this time in our history. In fact, scholars found it necessary to introduce a new term for progressive pedagogy. In “The Need for the ‘Permissive’ in Basic Communications,” Arnold E. Needham defines permissive education as “student-selected, student-planned, individually planned, activities in communications, as distinct from committee-planned and committee-imposed assignments” (13). He further states that

the permissive also denotes... an ‘atmosphere’ or classroom setting in which the instructor and the members of the class accept, and do not reject, each other at their current levels of achievement in the language arts. A two-way, or interpersonal, relationship prevails; all those concerned are taken where they are and as they are. All truly student-centered work in communications would have to begin at this point and work outward, as if along the radius of a series of concentric circles. (13)

Anyone who is familiar with Dewey’s educational theory would have to find some similarities between Dewey and Needham’s methods. In Experience and Education, Dewey emphasizes “the organic connection between education and personal experience” (12) as well as a commitment “to some kind of empirical and experimental philosophy” (13). Experience is the starting point for Dewey, just as it is for Needham.

Dewey, however, is more explicit about the dangers of student-centered teaching philosophies. “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience,” he continues,

does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative.

Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience.

(13)

Communication scholars at the conference were clearly engaging the empiricism and the student-centered methods that were a part of progressive teaching philosophy, but if they were still working toward progressive political goals, they were not talking about them in the public forum.

What becomes ironic about this divorcing of progressive method from progressive ends is that the effectiveness of communication courses often got used for purposes with which many progressives would have been less than comfortable. Though Heyda’s project has an entirely different end than this study, he points to many of these cross-purposes in his investigation of our early “turf wars.” Citing Thomas Dunn’s early history of our field, Heyda argues that communication courses enjoyed success in the fifties because the military had found their methods so effective during the War.<sup>28</sup> As early as the twenties, college teachers had noted a lack in the first-year composition courses in English

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<sup>28</sup> For an even more thorough analysis of the co-opting of progressive goals, see Katherine Adams’s Progressive Politics and the Training of America’s Persuaders.

“which had been focused on the teaching of correctness” (qtd. in Heyda 666). The communications movement found answers to this lack in “linguistics, in semantics, in the psychology and philosophy of language” (666). While universities were slow to embrace these techniques, the military was quick to adopt and utilize the methods of the communication course. “During the Second World War,” Thomas Dunn points out, “the term communication came into widespread use, largely from the impetus given by the special needs of war trainees whose preparation for receiving and giving military commands, making reports on activities, and directing operations both orally and in writing was not adequately provided by the traditional college training” (qtd. in Heyda 665). The success in the communication course during the war, then, gave the communications course an advantage. These techniques had been proven during the war and could continue to improve the communication skills of the rapidly growing population of G.I.s after it (Heyda 666).

Understandably, communication scholars used this to their advantage after WWII. Jean Malmstrom points out, for example, an important part of this history: composition courses that were based in traditional language arts, according to the armed services, were unrealistic, ineffective, and too slow. Language, from the armed services point of view, should be studied as an instrument for communicating ideas in a social system. It should also—and most importantly—be studied as a desperately needed tool for mediation—a tool for mediation at every level of our lives... (qtd. in Heyda 666)

Ironically, the military was very quick to warm up to the more efficient teaching methods of progressive pedagogy. That progressives, politically speaking, were often conscious objectors did not stop the military from employing their techniques.

The general thrust of Heyda's argument, then, is that compositionists, who had at first attempted to define themselves against literature faculty, had to join forces with humanist literature faculty to defend itself against the encroachments of the communication course:<sup>29</sup>

If big enrollment increases just after World War II had buoyed spirits at the time of CCCC's formation, by the mid 1950s, the journal's tone would leave little doubt that these lifted spirits had belonged, in the main, to advocates for communications. For communications, the enrollment boom only confirmed a place for its teachings in the new world of mass higher education opening for business on college campuses. Composition, on the other hand, would read the boom as jeopardizing its place in an academy given over increasingly to providing for the mass at the expense of the individual. Such differences led, soon enough, to heightened tensions between composition and communications. By the time the turf wars between the two groups had heated up, in CCC in the mid- and late-1950s, reference to threats to English posed by ever more dire enrollment projections had become commonplace. If literature represented the "common enemy" in 1948, by the mid-1950s it had come to look more

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<sup>29</sup> Diana George and John Trimbur make a similar argument in "The 'Communication Battle,' or Whatever Happened to the 4<sup>th</sup> C?"

like a disciplinary high ground in need of defense against too much experimentation, “permissive” teaching, and “remediation.” (667)

While this split had not yet fully occurred in the early part of the fifties, the seeds for these tensions are clearly discernable from the outset of CCC. In fact, some of them emerge in the reports themselves.

For example, in one report the question was specifically raised: “Is there any room in the elementary composition course for the study of literature as literature—in the sense of *belles lettres*?” The answer that they gave to this question was simply “there is not very much room! If ‘literature as literature’ is to be studied at all, it should be limited in amount; it should come late in the course; and it should be clearly designated for what it is—something apart, essentially, from the central material of the course” (12). This conversation shows that the tension between composition and literature was based on a binary between literature as specialized language study and composition as general language study. There was no room in this discussion for the general uses of literature in the cultural-historical sense that Oliver described.

The fact, however, that these tensions between practicality and humanism were discernable in communication seminars as well complicates Heyda’s assertion that these tensions were primarily on the composition side of the equation. Regarding the communications course, several members of one workshop questioned the “practical emphasis of the course” (16). They took the questioning one step further by stating that they “deplored, as ultimately dangerous, the loss of the humanistic aspects of the more traditional course” (16):

This view calls for more ‘self-expression,’ more attention to the precision needed to communicate personal experience accurately in themes and essays. It calls also for much greater use of literary materials in reading. The consensus was, however, that to accomplish anything significant in the traditional direction would certainly entail jeopardizing the full program outlines above. Furthermore, literature is so important it deserves a required course in its own right. (16)

By the end of the workshop, the practicality of the course won out. It was decided by these members that “approximately ninety percent of all writing should be expository in nature” (10).

***Intermission: Kenneth Burke Speaks to the CCCC***

When CCCC met in 1950, they invited Kenneth Burke to give a presentation about the nature of the composition course. His talk represented an entirely different perspective than Weaver’s or McCrimmon’s the year before it. Kenneth Burke entered the conversation about first-year composition from a very unusual angle. His talk, which he would later publish in the Journal of General Education under the title “Rhetoric—Old and New,” subverts the assumption that there is an unbridgeable gap between literary criticism and composition studies. Beginning with the assumption “that writing and the criticism of writing have an area in common,” Burke hopes that his argument, “though presented from the standpoint of literary criticism, may be found relevant to the teaching of communication” (202). Anyone in the audience who was familiar with his recently published Rhetoric of Motives would have known that his conception of

literary criticism was relevant to the teaching of composition because it was primarily rhetorical in orientation. Like Oliver, Burke was interested in the ways that techniques of literary criticism could be applied to a broader social context.

Because of this highly idiosyncratic approach, Burke's talk gives a radically different frame to put around the objectives and methods of composition and communication courses. One reason for this is his metaphorical approach.

As a way of beginning, Burke asks us

to imagine a dialogue between two characters: "Studiosus" and "Neurosis." Studiosus would be somewhat of a misnomer for the first figure, who represents a not very interested member of a freshman class taking a required course in composition; and Neurosis would be his teacher. (202)

Studiosus asks the teacher to defend the subject of composition, and Neurosis responds with an apology. This apology falls into three stages, which Burke roughly equates to "an Inferno, a Purgatorio, and a Paradiso" (202). He describes each stage as follows:

First would be an account of the abysmal problems that beset the use of language. Next would come a movement of transition, whereby the very sources of lamentation could, if beheld from a different angle, be transformed into the promissory. This would be the purgatorial stage.

And, despite the mournfulness of our times, a glorious paradisiacal ending seemed feasible, if we did a certain amount of contriving. (202)

Those familiar with Burke will recognize the fact that the three stages of this speech also outline the three stages of Burke's rhetorical/philosophical project. Remembering the discussion from last chapter about Burke's middle period, we can also see these three stages falling into the realms of Grammar, Rhetoric, and Symbolic.

What is essential for our study, then, is to analyze how these three stages apply to empirical, humanist, and progressive epistemologies as they apply to the first-year composition classroom. The first stage, dealing with the abysmal problems that beset the use of language, deals with objectivist assumptions about language. "The first stage would stress the great deceptions of speech... it would note," Burke contends, "how men wander through 'forests of symbols.' Man a symbol-using animal. Expiate on the fog of words through which we stumble, perhaps adding an image (the dog and the waterfall heard enigmatically beyond the mist)" (202). While he is alluding to Baudelaire's sonnet on "Correspondences" here, Burke turns from this association to the more "immediate social purposes" that Oliver speaks about in his polemic:

Here we would consider the problem of news: the *necessary* inadequacy of the report, even in the case of the *best* reporting; the bungling nature of the medium; the great bureaucratic dinosaurs of news-collecting; the added risks that arise from the *dramatic* aspects of news. (202)

Burke's treatment of reports is not objectivist. While the objectivist goal is to write the clearest, most adequate report, Burke's goal is to demonstrate the impossibility of writing objectively. Burke imagines a course that illustrates for

students what happens when “each day’s ‘reality’ is ‘dramatically’ put together for us by enterprises that comb the entire world for calamities, conflicts, and dire forebodings” (203). Furthermore, he hopes to show how “such a documentary replica of the arena confuses us as to the actual *recipe* of motives on which the world is operating” (203).

Burke then argues, as an “aside,” that “this is the situation, as regards the present state of literary criticism: When aesthetic criticism came in, there was a corresponding demotion of rhetoric. Rhetoric was exiled. And, emigrating, it received a home among the various so-called ‘new sciences’” (203). What Burke hopes to assert is a new rhetoric in our field, “one designed to restore structures maimed by the vandalism of the exclusively aesthetic” (203). By focusing on key terms, he argues, we can repair this vandalism. “The key term for the old rhetoric,” Burke continues, “was ‘persuasion’ and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the ‘new’ rhetoric would be ‘identification’” (203). Identification for Burke is a device (as it is in classical rhetoric, when a speaker tries to identify himself with an audience), but it is also an end “as when people earnestly yearn to identify themselves with some group or other” (203). This focusing upon identification as an end connects rhetoric back to an ethical realm within humanism:

Here they are not necessarily being acted upon by a conscious external agent, but may be acting upon themselves to this end. In such identification there is a partially dreamlike, idealistic motive, somewhat

compensatory to real differences or divisions, which the rhetoric of identification would transcend. (203)

It is precisely through this type of identification that the character Neurosis is transformed. “For, if identification includes the realm of transcendence, it has, by the same token, brought us into the realm of transformation, or dialectic” (203). It is through this gesture that

Neurosis might now be renamed ‘Socraticus.’ Socraticus could point out how the very lostness of men in their symbolic quandaries has led to the invention of miraculously ingenious symbolic structures—whereas the very aspects of language we might otherwise fear can become engrossing objects of study and appreciation; and works once designed to play upon audiences’ passions, to “move” them rhetorically toward practical decision beyond the work, can now be enjoyed for their ability to move us in the purely poetic sense, as when, hearing a lyric or seeing a sunrise, we might say, “How moving!” (203-204)

Here again, though, we watch Burke move from the poetic back to the practical again. After this poetic move, Burke reconsiders semantic theory, connecting it to the Platonic concerns with the “Upward Way (linguistic devices whereby we may move from a world of disparate particulars to a principle of one-ness, an “ascent” got, as the semanticist might say, by a movement toward progressively ‘higher levels of generalization’)” (204). He also makes it clear that, through identification, “there could be a descent, a Downward Way, back into the world of particulars, all of which would be identified with the genius of the unitary

principle discovered *en route*” (204). This process, he contends, creates a pyramid that moves us into the third state, his Paradiso. In this state, “Socraticus might now even change his name to “Hierarchicus” where we are invited to “dwell upon the double nature of hierarchy” (204). In this realm, there is the purely verbal ascent, with corresponding resources of identification... But there is also another line of ascent; and this involves the relation between the dialectics of identification and hierarchic structure in the social, or sociological, sense” (204).

His final goal, then, would be this:

Here we would consider how matters of prestige (in the old style, “wonder,” or in the terminology of Corneille, “admiration”) figure in the ultimate resources of “identification.” Here we would note how our ideas of “beauty,” and even “nature,” are “fabulous,” concerning within themselves a social pageantry. Here would be the ultimate step in the discussion of the ways in which man walks among “forests of symbols.” (204)

His presentation then continues with several extended examples of how this thesis could be localized in different works of literature, in different social and personal relations. “Here is a grand device,” he concludes, “central to polemic, which is forever translating back and forth between materialist and idealist terms for motives” (209).

I treat Burke’s talk as an intermission in this chapter for several reasons. First, it seems to be an intermission because it had no discernable effect on the attendees of the second Conference on College Composition and Communication.

Despite Burke's radical plan of action, the workshop reports contain none of Burke's suggestions. This lack of effect is, quite frankly, understandable. Burke's speech is certainly a difficult read, one that requires many readings to fully absorb, if this text—and the implications of it for a philosophy of first-year composition—can ever be fully absorbed and applied to the first-year composition classroom. Only scholars who were already familiar with Burke's transformations of Korzybski's "higher levels of generalization" could have understood, on one hearing, the plan of action he proposed.<sup>30</sup>

His speech is an "intermission" because it takes place in a theoretical space both within and separate from the actual drama we could title "Cold War Writing Instruction." Burke hopes to transform composition and communication by merging it back with literary criticism. This is not an argument for literature in the composition classroom. It is instead, an argument for the removal of the rhetoric/poetic binary that causes literature and composition to live in separate theoretical spaces. Burke's critique of New Criticism, which is not merely an aside, of course, turns out to be a critique out of the divisions between literature and composition courses. The merging of these two theoretical spaces would not only re-rhetorize literature, it would re-poeticize composition and communication, and this, Burke optimistically contends, "would be something that even Studiosus might readily applaud" (205).

When we compare this speech to the one he made to the American Writer's Congress in 1935, we can certainly see that Burke takes a more

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<sup>30</sup> See Burke's Grammar of Motives 172-175, 238-241.

circuitous route. We can only speculate on the reason for his obscurity, but we can say that the fifties were a time when few scholars spoke directly about the Cold War climate in America. Even fewer spoke about Red Scare politics, unless of course they were on the side of anticommunism. In 1951, for example, College English published Ben Ray Redman's review of Arthur Koestler, who joined the Communist Party at the end of 1931 and left it in the spring of '39. This article would have been uncontroversial, as the majority of Koestler's work explains the incompatibility of intellectual and communist life, fitting in well with the basic tenets of Vital Center liberalism.

"He was unable to make the sudden leap," Redman argues, made by so many of his fellow ex-Communists, from the bosom of one infallible church into the bosom of another. He has longed, and still longs, for faith; but he has been unable to repeat his act of 'intellectual self-castration.' He has looked to science for certainties, but he has been unable to find in science all the answers for which he yearns. He has come to admit that the half-loaf of imperfect democracy is better than the full loaf of a nonexistent utopia. (136)

This attitude is interesting because it also shows that scholars in English studies, while they may not have been publicly responding to anticommunism, were reacting to the rise of science. One reason for this would have been the rising post-Holocaust, post-Hiroshima despair on the part of many intellectuals. The popularity of Koestler's *The God that Failed* reflected the lost optimism of all ex-

Communists, as well as the growing awareness that grand visions were impossible when set face to face with the stark reality of the nuclear age.

Of course, what composition teachers could not have known at this time was the role that empiricism would eventually play in our field of study. Composition studies eventually took up the authority of scientific discourse. Whether this was a response to universities' pressure toward objectivism, or whether it was a reaction against the elitist assumptions behind literature courses that continued to marginalize the composition field, or both, our turn toward the "soft-sciences" of sociological and educational research helped solidify our field. But it is precisely because science had not yet entered this arena that we can learn a great deal by looking at the way rhetorical theorists dealt with the relationship between rhetoric and science in the early Cold War period.

***No Time to Be A Sophist: Richard Weaver and the Rhetoric of the Fifties***

No rhetorician would have been more surprised by the shift in the field of composition and rhetoric studies toward science than Richard Weaver. As Connors argues "Weaver probably never suspected that his own field, rhetoric and human communication, might one day seek to cross the invisible but potent line separating the humanities from the sciences" (1). Though Connors primarily locates this shift in our field in the seventies and eighties, we have seen that there was seismic activity underground that was creating this shift in the late forties and early fifties. At a time when academics experienced pressures towards objectivist epistemologies, Weaver steered clear of objectivism by asserting a humanist-rhetorical idealism. As Connors argues, Weaver knew that

rhetoricians must be concerned with a wider realm than are scientists—for scientists are concerned only with facts and the relationships between them, while rhetorical concerns must include both the scientific occurrence and the axiological ordering of these facts. We should not in our search for provable knowledge forget that the essential use of all knowledge is in aiding humanity in the search for consensually-arrived-at truth. (19)

Ethics of Rhetoric (1953) sought to remedy the rising objectivism that loomed in the early Cold War period, but McCarthy's presence makes Weaver's argument much more complicated than Connors portrays it. After all, one of the central theses of Ethics of Rhetoric, as Giles explains it, was that

arguments from definition and analogy were the most ethical forms of argument and—not coincidentally—that they were arguments most compatible with idealists and conservatives like himself... At the other end of the spectrum were arguments based on consequence or circumstance, which Weaver linked to a relativist, pragmatic, liberal orientation... From Weaver's perspective these arguments were inferior because of what he saw as their transience and shortsightedness. (128)

Science, after all, at least pretended to be in the ideal realm of truth, in the opposite realm of arguments based on consequence or circumstance. So Weaver's push toward a conservative idealism followed the same general drift of the time, but it was distinct from objectivism. This is important to our study for a reason that neither Giles nor Connors mentions, namely this: McCarthyism must

have played a role in leading Weaver to conceptualize rhetoric in this way. Weaver aligns a person's politics with the type of argument that he or she most often uses, not what the end result of that argument actually is. This Platonism undoubtedly was a response to McCarthyism. After all, in this schema, McCarthy becomes a liberal: "Idealistic and foundational arguers are, to Weaver, "conservative," while pragmatic and relativistic arguers are "liberal"—regardless of what they might claim or how they might be labeled" (Giles 129). But it is important that Weaver felt in his historical moment that a liberal was a person who did not identify with the left, but with the center, one who waited until circumstance dictated what stance to take in a situation (131). When we remember that Schlesinger positioned himself in this way, we can see that Weaver avoided the trappings of Vital Center liberalism as well. "What finally distinguishes conservative rhetoric is respect not for *the way things are*, but for *the way things ought to be*" (131). In this light, we can see Weaver undercutting both McCarthy and Schlesinger, liberal and conservative anticommunism by extension, particularly the cynical view that humans are corrupt and base and thereby any conceptions of rhetoric that do not take this into account are naïve.

Turning directly to Weaver, we cannot help but think of McCarthy when Weaver writes about "charismatic terms" in "Ultimate Terms in Contemporary Rhetoric." In this chapter, he defines "charismatic terms" as those that "have a power which is not derived, but which is in some mysterious way given" (227). Charismatic terms, he argues,

seem to have been broken loose somehow and to operate independently of referential connections (although in some instances an earlier history of referential connection may be made out). Their meaning seems inexplicable unless we accept the hypothesis that their content proceeds out of a popular will that they shall mean something. In effect, they are rhetorical by common consent, or by “charisma.” As is the case with charismatic authority, where the populace gives the leader a power which can by no means be explained through his personal attributes, and permits him to use it effectively and even arrogantly, the charismatic term is given its load of impulsion with reference, and it functions by convention. (227-228)

Most interestingly, the example he gives is the term “freedom,” the source of the greatest sacrifices in our culture and the one with the most obscure meaning. “The fact,” Weaver argues, “that the most extensive use of the term is made by modern politicians to get men to assume more responsibility (in the form of military service, increased taxes, abridgement of rights, etc.) seems to carry no weight” (228). The term “democracy,” he argues prophetically, may be heading in the same direction.

This prophecy points us to the fact that the early fifties were not a time that academics in English departments wanted to identify themselves as rhetoricians, let alone sophistic ones. It is easy, in our now well-established field, to forget that the abuses of rhetoric in the public sphere gave scholars another reason to reject rhetoric entirely. Rhetoric became propaganda in the most

negative sense. This rejection most often took the form of moving toward objectivism in the sciences and liberal humanism in the arts. While the outcome of this rejection had negative effects on writing instruction, it seems understandable that some scholars would take up this conservative position. McCarthy was the worst kind of sophist. He worked solely for his own gain and used whatever contingency he could in order to make his claims.

***Have I Got A Job for You: McCarthy as a Sophist***

McCarthyism: The Fight for America (1952) might be the worst example of sophism's sinister side. In this pamphlet, McCarthy set out to establish his political agenda in America and to give "documented answers to questions asked by friend and foe" (i). Because both his rhetoric and the function of the university play a key role in this pamphlet, it is worth investigating in some detail. The pamphlet begins by blaming the Truman administration for its failures to stop communism in China, Korea, and in Eastern Europe, then goes on to suggest that these failures were the result of both incompetence and small number of disloyal elements in governmental agencies. When McCarthy tells his story of sitting in front of the Tydings committee, he sounds like a man being persecuted, instead of a man who is persecuting Communists and fellow travelers without evidence.

He proudly reports that he forced "sex deviates" to resign from the State Department, not because they were disloyal, but because homosexuals "are considered by all intelligence agencies of the government to be security risks

[because] they are subject to blackmail” (14).<sup>31</sup> He also argues that it would only be unethical to use his congressional immunity to expose Communists if the charges were not true. He blames Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Ambassador Phillip C. Jessup for the “sell-out” of China. He continues his case against Owen Lattimore and General George C. Marshall. He claims that the Tydings Committee was set up to thwart any real investigation and implies that they were doing so to protect Truman and his State Department. Anyone who disagrees with him, he argues without irony, is engaged in a Communist-directed “smear attack” against him.

Despite the preposterousness of these polemics, it may be the final argument that would have seemed most disturbing to academics. It is here that he promises to turn his power against institutions. The final question that gets asked of McCarthy is “Senator McCarthy, what can I—an average American, holding no public office, and owning no newspaper or radio stations—do to fight Communism?” Communists are trying to “infiltrate the education system of this country and control school and college publications” (101), he replies. After claiming that communist professors number 3,000 in the U.S., he rallies his constituents by suggesting that “every man and woman in America can appoint himself or herself to undo the damage which is being done by Communist infiltration in our schools” (101). His final rhetorical gesture is worth quoting in full:

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<sup>31</sup> “In addition to the security question,” McCarthy writes, “it should be noted that individuals who are morally weak and perverted and who are representing the State Department in foreign countries certainly detract from the prestige of this nation” (15). McCarthy’s rhetoric is full of this type of homophobia.

Countless times I have heard parents throughout the country complain that their sons and daughters were sent to college as good Americans and returned four years later as wild-eyed radicals. The educational system of this country cannot be cleansed of Communist influence by legislation. It can only be scrubbed and flushed and swept clean if the mothers and fathers, and the sons and daughters, of this nation individually decide to do this job. This can be your greatest contribution to America. This is a job which you can do. This is a job which you must do if America and Western Civilization are to live. (101)

Clearly, McCarthy is no stranger to hyperbole. The entire fate of Western Civilization hinges on the parents of America, who can do what legislation cannot, get out their mops, rubber gloves, and brooms and clean up the educational system one school at a time. McCarthy, it seems, was at least somewhat aware of the fact that the law was not on his side, but this did not stop him from continuing to argue (from experience, we have to assume):

I warn you, however, that the task will not be a pleasant one. When you detect and start to expose a teacher with a Communist mind, you will be damned and smeared. You will be accused of endangering academic freedom. Remember, to those Communist-minded teachers academic freedom means *their* right to force *you* to hire *them* to teach *your* children a philosophy in which *you* do not believe. To Communist-minded teachers academic freedom means their right to deny you the freedom to hire loyal Americans to teach your children. (101, *italics his*)

Though it is humorous to accuse McCarthy of practicing subtlety here, he does make an interesting choice when he describes teachers as having “Communist minds,” instead of simply calling them Communists. This, of course, gives anticommunists more flexibility for grounding their claims. After all, one of the favorite techniques of countersubversives was to label all progressive educators as Communists. A teacher who believed that we should work toward greater economic equality in America could be accused of having a communist mind, even if he or she had never been a member of the CP.

McCarthy closes his argument with a rhetorical use of antithesis: “We cannot win the fight against Communism if Communist-minded professors are teaching your children. We cannot lose the fight against Communism if loyal Americans are teaching your children” (101). This type of argument shows that McCarthy sincerely believed that knowledge was transmitted directly from the mind of the teacher to the mind of the student, that teachers were capable of radicalizing students based solely on their own beliefs. Likewise, he believed that loyal Americans would keep students loyal to America.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> McCarthy’s rhetoric sounds strangely prophetic, very much like recent conservative rhetoric regarding the necessities for less radical professors in the academy, but his methods are hardly as sophisticated as some more recent conservatives. David A. Hollinger’s proves this in his brilliant article “Money and Academic Freedom a Half-Century after McCarthyism.” In this article, he traces a form of conservative reaction to liberal academia that proved to be far more effective than McCarthyism because, quite frankly, it had a much grander vision. Hollinger summarizes a memorandum that was written by Virginia lawyer Lewis Powell in 1971. The memo outlines how big business should engage in a four-pronged attack on academic liberal epistemology:

First, big business should find ways to provide sustained financial support outside the academy for social science and humanities scholars with sound views... Second, big business should establish a network of popular

When rhetoric receives this type of treatment, an obvious avenue for rhetoricians to take would be to redefine rhetoric. If nothing else, the presence of Richard Weaver shows that there was at least one other viable option between a narrow formalist humanism and objectivism. Weaver's rhetoric shows a response embedded in rhetorical idealism. McCarthy's rhetoric helps us see why a conservative Democrat like Weaver would want to put particular emphasis on the importance of defining our terms, why he would want to move us away from the worst types of argument by circumstance. It may also be why he felt that "the student of rhetoric must realize that in the contemporary world he is confronted not only by evil practitioners, but also, and probably to an unprecedented degree, by men who are conditioned by the evil created by others" (232). While

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speakers and media personalities who could effectively popularize the ideas developed by these scholars... Third, big business should lobby trustees and administrators at colleges and universities concerning the political 'imbalance' of their faculties, hoping gradually to see more and more conservative intellectuals integrated into these faculties. Fourth, big business should urge campus schools of business administration to broaden their curriculum and their role in campus life. (164)

I do not think it would have occurred to McCarthy to visualize "conservative think tanks," or to orchestrate media attention to any realm that existed beyond his own career. Nor could he have understood the possibilities and prestige that business schools could produce on university campuses, how they could change the entire thrust of university life from within.

But then again, Hollinger informs us, Lewis Powell would eventually write the opinion that is "generally credited with providing the constitutional foundation for affirmative action. Universities could take ethnoracial categories into account among other considerations, wrote Powell, in the interest of cultural diversity" (182). The irony that Powell both "plotted for the political neutralization and transformation of faculties" (182) and helped give universities the freedom to decide on what grounds they would like to hire is not lost on Hollingsworth, nor is it lost on this writer, but it does point to a fundamental difference between two different types of arguments. Powell is a clear example of Weaver's ethical arguer. He remains consistent to his belief that institutions of knowledge have a right to direct their own ideological visions in both cases. McCarthy, we can safely say, argued differently.

McCarthy clearly believed that teachers acted like absolute authorities in the classroom, that they imposed their knowledge from above, attempting to mold students to their way of thinking in whatever way was most effective, Weaver wanted students to “hold a dialect with [themselves] to see what the wider circumstances of [their] terms of persuasion [were]” (232). If a significant change in our culture’s direction could have been brought about by the humanist goal of having students engage in dialectic with themselves, Weaver’s conservative rhetoric might have made a difference in our culture.

A debate between Richard Weaver and Kenneth Burke would have been fascinating at the second CCCC. Instead, Weaver debated McCrimmon, and Burke debated Flesch. Though Burke’s speech was deliberately obscure, it still outlined a pragmatic rhetoric with progressive appeal. Weaver had the luxury of being clearer than Burke because his stance was more conservative, whereas Burke operated from a different set of circumstances and a less popular political orientation.

History shows us that Burke felt compelled to change some of his earlier work in the current political climate. When Burke revised Permanence and Change for the second edition (published in 1953), he deleted the following passage:

Communism is a cooperative rationalization, or perspective, which fulfills the requirements suggested by the poetic metaphor. It is fundamentally humanistic, as is poetry. Its ethics is referable to the socio-biologic genius

of man (the economic conquest of the machine being conceived within such a frame). (Permanence, First Edition, 344-45, as qtd. by Behr)

Martin Behr's Critical Moments in the Rhetoric of Kenneth Burke takes Burke at his word here and argues:

That Burke admits that he indeed erred by proposing that communism is the only possible orientation which, within industrialized societies, permits cooperative uses of the competitive shows us the extent to which his thinking has changed, that he was responding to a particular set of social, economic, and political circumstances. (33)

To admit that one erred in an earlier work is one thing. To actually delete a passage from an earlier work is another, but Behr is certainly correct when he says that the current political circumstances may have led him to delete the passage. Personal circumstances may have led to its deletion as well. Burke had recently lost a position that the English department at the University of Washington had offered him for the academic year beginning in 1952. The higher administration rescinded the English department's offer after discovering that "there was too much concern among 'certain influential friends of the University'" (Schrecker, No Ivory Tower 267).

Ironically, this incident occurred at the same time that Albert Kitzhaber was working on his doctoral dissertation at the University of Washington. The fact that Kitzhaber finished, in 1953, his highly influential Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900, gives us further proof that the early Cold War period was not a time of complete passivity in the realm of writing instruction. As John T.

Gage explains in the introduction to the published version, his dissertation, which was read in Xerox form by several generations of rhetoric and composition scholars before finally being published in the early 90s, was “one of the important markers of the beginning of [composition and rhetoric as a discipline]” (vii). “It is the first book-length historical study,” Gage writes, “of the subject, by a scholar who helped to initiate the reevaluation of rhetoric in American education that made the so-called ‘paradigm shift’ in composition during the 1960s possible” (vii). Although a careful investigation of Burke’s letters fails to connect Burke’s invitation to the University of Washington with Porter Perrin, who was Kitzhaber’s dissertation advisor, we do know that Perrin “was among the first to see the relevance of Kenneth Burke’s ideas to composition” (Kitzhaber, xix). Here again, we see Burke in the thick of things, only this time as an absence.

Using an analysis of nineteenth-century textbooks, Kitzhaber argues that an overemphasis on formal theories destroyed the potential for rhetoric to produce “good writing” in the classroom:

The effect of the forms of discourse on rhetorical theory and practice has been bad. They represent an unrealistic view of the writing process, a view that assumes writing is done by formula and in a social vacuum. They turn the attention of both student and teacher toward an academic exercise instead of toward a meaningful act of communication in a social context. (139)

Had Kitzhaber been able to attend the first meetings of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, he might have found himself in conversation

with many composition and communication scholars who would have agreed with him on this subject. Nevertheless, this is no reason to disagree with his conclusion, which states:

most composition teaching today, in fact, is still being done in the shadow of rhetorical theory that came into prominence between 1885 to 1900.

The “four forms of discourse,” and the Unity-Coherence-Emphasis formula have by no means been widely discredited even now... The ideal of correctness in mechanical details, which came in the later nineties to dominate rhetorical instruction, has today perhaps more supporters than any other single aspect of the rhetorical process. (226)

While our investigation of the early meetings of CCCC proves that the scholars who were there did not support this type of rhetorical instruction, Kitzhaber, in 1953, laid the foundation for composition historians that would follow him by asserting composition’s claim to a rhetorical tradition that refused to remove itself from the cultural sphere.

***Curators and Custodians: The Field Publicly Responds to Anticommunism***

In 1953, the same year Kitzhaber finished his response to politically repressive theories of writing instruction, the field of English explicitly responded to the problem of communism and anticommunism in a public forum. In November, still many months before the Senate censured McCarthy and many liberals and conservatives alike denounced McCarthy’s tactics, Harlen Adams opened the NCTE convention in Los Angeles by reading from a letter that

Eisenhower had recently sent to him about the importance of English studies.

Eisenhower writes:

The English language is a precious heritage. Great documents of human freedom, great poetry and philosophy are its treasures. As teachers of English, your associates in the National Council are the custodians of that heritage. More than that, you bear the responsibility for passing along to the youth of America a love for and an understanding of those ideals of our heritage which find repeated expression in our rich and flexible mother tongue—the ideals of peace, freedom, dignity, reverence for God, and respect for our fellow man.

Although the anonymous writer of “The National Council in Los Angeles” report suggests that “the audience listened appreciatively” (296), this does not prove that scholars in our field accepted Eisenhower’s argument. This gesture does show, however, that the leaders of the NCTE wanted to present a conformist ethos in this time of uncertainty.

Eisenhower’s letter speaks to the tensions defining the field during the early Cold War period. The two metaphors that he uses tell us much about his beliefs and assumptions regarding language production. English teachers, the letter contends, have to be both custodians of and curators for the English language. The language is the treasure, and we are custodians of the building that houses that treasure. As custodians, our role is to keep pure something that is always already present. But the custodians also have to inculcate belief on the part of visitors to this museum, so we must also be museum curators. Ironically,

Eisenhower unwittingly outlines the division between composition and literature as seen by a formalist. The composition teacher serves as a custodian by cleaning up errors in student writing. The literature teacher inculcates appreciation for great works of literature and philosophy.

After Adams read Eisenhower's letter, he reported on the state of the NCTE. In "Transition and Renaissance," the published version of this report, Adams announces that the committee on censorship had finally completed its pamphlet responding to what he refers to as "the problem of censorship of teaching materials and of controversial issues" (259). We had, in the field of English, finally responded to McCarthyism with a pamphlet titled Censorship and Controversy. Adams quotes extensively from the pamphlet in his address. Arguing that the pamphlet's position "is a bold and affirmative one," (259) he reads directly from it:

Teachers of language and literature believe that school and college discussion of vital problems can help young people to discover the underlying causes of the problems, to examine possible solutions, and to suspend judgment; that it will deter them from taking up extreme and untenable views; and that it will discourage the more common—and more dangerous—drift toward apathy. Failure to face genuine issues in school and college brings loss of interest in education and a loss of respect for it.

(qtd. in Adams 259)

These concerns, of course, are central to rhetoric and composition studies today, but we may want to know whether the writers of the pamphlet believed that

students should suspend judgments indefinitely, which is generally an objectivist goal, or whether they were meant to suspend judgment until they came to informed conclusions. Likewise, while we generally assume that students need to be introduced to meaningful ideas and debates in the classroom, not everyone will share the belief that the function of education is to deter students from taking up extreme views. The education that gets described here is one that helps maintain the status quo by keeping students from taking up radical positions. Not only is this a paternalistic gesture, it assumes that all extreme viewpoints are indeed untenable. The structure of the argument does not allow the reader to look at extreme and untenable viewpoints as two separate ideas. The humanist emphasis on reason is behind this ideological fusion. Students can be introduced to radical ideas in class for the sake of interest, but reason will help them drift toward views that are less extreme, views that would be considered tenable by most people. This attitude stands apart from progressivism, which assumes that peaceful reforms—sometimes radical ones—are necessary.

Just as we saw when looking at Vital Center philosophy, we see tensions emerge when scholars try to use a moderate stance against the pressures of anticommunism. Like Schlesinger and Raymond B. Allen (and unlike the AAUP), the writers of the pamphlet believed that members of the CP did not have the right to teach in institutions of higher education. Adams felt that the following passage was important enough to excerpt from the pamphlet and read to his audience:

If a person wishes to espouse Communism, Fascism, or any other “ism” he should be free to do so, to exercise, too, his right to be a martyr, and perhaps even to suffer death for his ideas. But this freedom does not in itself include, in our judgment, any right to teach in our schools and colleges, whose purpose is to inculcate faith in our institutions and to promote a society of free people, not to assist a totalitarian regime that seeks to enslave the human mind. (qtd. in Adams 259)

This passage makes it clear that Adams wants to use the objectivist function of suspending judgment to separate the field of English from the damage that anticommunist attacks could potentially cause. The NCTE statement has many of the same implications as Raymond B. Allen’s injunction about the role of professors in the university. In fact, the NCTE statement seems even more politically conservative. It conflates communism and fascism with any other “ism.” This could include, we assume, Marxism, anarchism, socialism, progressivism, though probably not capitalism, formalism, or objectivism. It conflates membership in the Communist Party with the espousal of CP doctrine in the classroom. Like Allen, the writers of Censorship and Controversy fail to even consider the possibility of a professor being a Communist Party member while not espousing communism in the classroom. Furthermore, the writers of the pamphlet do not qualify the notion that the purpose of the university is to inculcate faith in our institutions. The writers of Censorship and Controversy explicitly state that the business of teachers is to inculcate faith in our institutions. Of course, this would not be problematic if the writers had been more specific

about what “faith” means, but the lack of definition leaves too much room for critics to assume that any type of criticism of our institutions equals a lack of faith in them.

Undoubtedly, the NCTE found itself in a difficult position in 1953. Despite Eisenhower’s calming influence, the nation was still in the midst of a Red Scare. To stand up for a minority of professors who had been involved or were still involved with the CP must have felt like political suicide at the time. McCarthyism, not communism, was the enemy of academic freedom. Adams spoke to this when he read another quotation from the pamphlet to his audience:

It is the strong conviction of the National Council of Teachers of English that the schools and colleges of the nation must be on guard against Communism and also against those persons who use the fear of Communism as a pretext for their vicious attacks upon the American educational system. (qtd. in Adams 259)

Those people were, of course, McCarthy and the Senators and House members who made a career out of red baiting, who attacked all kinds of leftist thought under the guise of fighting communism. The NCTE hoped to remedy this situation by getting more of the public involved. Adams felt that this solution was important enough to read to his listeners as well:

In any particular instance of difference over the use of instructional materials, controversial topics, or speakers in schools and colleges, no single individual or group can make decisions alone. At least five parties may be actively concerned: teachers; students; school authorities,

including boards of control; parents, other relatives and friends of the students; and leaders of community as represented by influential individuals and organizations. (qtd. in Adams 259-60)

The primary concern here centers on both curricula and methods. Ignoring the question of what should happen to teachers who have lost their jobs, the NCTE shows faith in the public sphere. It is generally hoped that if parents, teachers, administrators, and the general community got more directly involved in what happened in the classroom, fear would diminish, thus putting an end to anticomunist fervor.

The rest of Adam's speech is equally remarkable because it provides us a concrete connection between anticomunism and the desire of administrators to move away from the progressive educational slant toward child-centered education. Adams argues that student-centered pedagogies have helped us understand

the importance of recognizing individual differences. At the same time two dangers have arisen: (1) the danger of merely encouraging "self-expression," which has sometimes meant only unguided, unrestrained, unsocial behavior in the pose of individuality and (2) the danger of minimizing standards, which could result in a leveling to mediocrity, in the attempt to effect conformity and adjustment. (263)

Quoting Joseph Wood Krutch, Adams fears that "normalcy" has replaced "excellence" altogether. Looking for reform, he argues that "it is the aim of democracy to produce an independent, distinctive individual who is, also, a co-

operative, understanding, socialized citizen” (263-264). In this passage, Adams asserts the ideal of an “independent, distinctive individual”—a fundamentally humanist ideal—at a time when anticommunists were conflating progressive educational techniques with—as Berlin puts it—softness on communism. “Excellence” became the term that helped mediate what liberals wanted to achieve in their classrooms while appealing to the values of what officials wanted from them.

Interestingly enough, administrators also looked toward the realm of the spiritual as a way of gaining ethos in the community. The emphasis on excellence was conflated in this address with an emphasis on spiritual matters. Adams argues that “there is a perceptible swing of the pendulum from a primary concern for material things to a renewed interest in things of the spirit” (264). Cremin argues that there was a tremendous amount of pressure from community leaders for universities to stand up against utilitarianism and focus more on the spiritual realm in colleges and universities during this time. Adams responds to this pressure by arguing that “for the teaching of spiritual values there is no teacher so well prepared as the teacher of literature” (264). In this case, we see literature rising up against the materialism that underlies the composition course.

Cremin also notes that religious leaders wanted universities to “convey through a revitalized humanistic curriculum ‘an appreciation of forms of art and science, of imagination and comprehension of life’s dimensions’ that ‘do not promise an immediate increment of obvious success’” (55). This agenda is more suited to literature or composition classes based on literature, and may point us to

another reason that composition courses aligned themselves with literature in the later part of the decade. Progressivism could have helped turn those primarily materialist concerns toward a different, more fundamentally democratic end, but not in this political climate.

The passages that Adams read to his audience summarize fairly well the content of the pamphlet, but further investigation of Censorship and Controversy yields one more important insight into how we responded to McCarthyism in English studies. Like most liberal anticommunists, the writers of the pamphlet excluded Communists from their institutions. They also show repressive tolerance to those who had once been Communists but were no longer, as long as they renounced all affiliation:

Among teachers, as among writers and other professional groups, some foolish idealists seduced by Communism in a period of stress and depression have come to their senses and repudiated Communism.

Toward such persons our attitude should be watchful but tolerant. (10)

This statement simplifies the reason that some leftist academics became Communists in the thirties and forties and reduces it to an individual neurosis. In the interest of fairness to liberal anticommunists, this statement also trivializes the principled reason that some liberal academics decided to repudiate communism in the early Cold War era by simply reducing this decision to “coming to their senses.” For a polemic such as this one, which tried to protect our rights as teachers to use the types of materials in the classroom that we were trained to use most effectively, this historical blindness may be understandable. For our

purposes, however, it is important to point out that the “watchful but tolerant” clause in this statement must have been repressive for teachers who had any type of progressive goals in their teaching. After all, McCarthy had encouraged his constituency to go after “Communist-minded professors” in the public forum. How many of us would not have changed our teaching in order to avoid even the possibility of having a student or a parent bring some aspect of our classrooms to the attention of administration or the broader general public?

***“The Microphone Hidden in the Ivy:” Responses to Red Scare Politics***

An answer to this question can be found by looking at the symposium about “Controversial Subjects in the Classroom” that College English published in 1954. It seems to suggest that many of us would have circumscribed our teaching in some way. The series of responses in this symposium proves that teachers found themselves and their teaching extensively changed during the Cold War period, not only because of McCarthyism but because of the broader political, cultural, and academic climate as well. In planning this symposium, the editors of College English had invited its readers to respond to the following question: “Should controversial subjects—for example, communism—be discussed in either literature or communication classes?” Six professors responded to the question.

Richard K. Welsh, at Arizona State College, responded with sarcasm so deep it is an understatement to describe it as cynical. “There is a microphone hidden in the ivy that clings to the ivory tower, and the professional

vivisectionists at the other end of the wire are not long in interpreting what they hear. The revelations,” he continues,

are as startling to college teachers as a trip through the hall of mirrors at a carnival funhouse. It is well that we examine our blunders and foolish notions before the inspectors come tapping at our door some night. Our chief blunder seems to be—according to others’ views of us—that we have tried to do more than our share. It is our duty to instruct tender minds in the manipulation of alphabetic symbols for reading and writing. More than that we must not do. Our foolish notion that we should train these tender minds to think with the aid of the symbols is a dangerous misconception that we had better get rid of. (459)

This passage, as parodic as it is, reflects an epistemological reality that Welsh saw around him. When Welsh refers to the manipulation of symbols, he refers to objectivist writing instruction in its barest form. Welsh’s response is another example of the power of the Cold War climate, how it pressured teachers to move toward word-manipulation only. He pushes back against this climate by illustrating what living in this reality would require teachers to do:

Keeping students from thinking may be much more difficult than training them to think. But it is not impossible... Some successful people have learned how to talk and write without conveying ideas. There is no reason why English teachers cannot teach their students this intellectual bead-stringing. (460)

He proposes that we revise our textbooks to contain “an entirely aseptic collection of essays,” and only include “the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution” as well as “articles on baseball, apple pie, and Mother... Any thing related to sex, religion, business, education, politics, and other vital aspects of life is definitely out” (460). While we have no way of knowing how deep Welsh’s jeremiad really goes—while we do not know how many of the vital aspects of life he kept in or out of his classroom—we do know, from this response, that he felt pressured to keep them out. The evidence of this pressure alone has deep implications for both literature and composition teachers.

He ends his response with an equally parodic (and this time sexist) metaphor:

At first I found it difficult to view English as a sort of handicraft subject, but a young lady majoring in physical education put me in my place. In a theme she described her recent experience as a counselor at an in-school camp for children. She told how the children were taken at night to view the stars and thus learn of ‘their place in the universe.’ Since I read that theme I have been content to go humbly about my business of teaching word-manipulation. Deep questions and controversial matters I leave in the capable hands of muscular maidens in the moonlight. (460)

While there is little use in deconstructing the message here and how he portrays it, it does reflect a certain amount of rage that many must have felt about what they were allowed to do in the classroom during this time. There were tremendous pressures to teach English as word-manipulation only. This relates directly to the

objectivist imperative. The business of English under objectivism is to reflect truth clearly and directly. There is no room to question how that truth comes about. There is no room for the humanist to use literature to show a student his or her place in the universe. In the literature class, the emphasis is on a literary text devoid of its entire political and historical context. In the composition classroom, the emphasis is even narrower: disembodied rhetorical forms and grammatical exercises.

As the second writer in the symposium, Robert A Dufour directly addresses the issue of composition classes. He suggests that “before deciding whether to discuss controversial subjects like communism, we should ask ourselves whether we would discuss them to *avoid* teaching composition or as a *means* to teaching it” (460, *italics his*). “Many of us would rather teach practically anything other than the extremely difficult subject of composition” (460). He argues that a subject like communism could be an effective means for teaching composition, but only if 1) the teacher knows enough about the subject “to lead a penetrating discussion,” 2) the class is capable of learning from this subject, 3) The teacher can get the students to “subordinate their emotions to their reason,” 4) There is enough time to cover such a complex matter, and 5) The subject can be limited enough for a short theme (460-61).

These five points underscore quite a few assumptions about the nature of a composition class in the Cold War era. The first places primary emphasis on the teacher’s authority. It assumes that the teacher has to be in the position of knowledge in the classroom in order to impose his or her wisdom on the class.

This is not entirely an unreasonable assumption, of course, but it does assume that the students have less of a role in class discussions than the teacher. The second idea is closely related to the first. It gives the teacher latitude to decide if a class is capable of learning from this type of subject. This view of writing instruction is paternalistic, assuming that a teacher has the role of protecting students who are incapable of receiving such information. The third assumes that emotion has no place in writing, that logos is the most important aspect of the rhetorical triangle and that it is the teacher's job to get students to realize and bring this separation into practice. The fourth assumes that complexity has no function in the classroom and the fifth relates to that from the final product's point of view. All five put the teacher in an authoritarian role, to one degree or another, which gives us further proof that some classrooms were more authoritarian in the Cold War era. A progressive teacher, after all, would not have the same concerns about authority as Dufour. A humanist teacher like Baird at Amherst would also fail to see problems with the disorienting nature of complex material.

William Sylvester looks at the issue from yet another angle, by trying to discern why students often avoid challenging issues altogether. "I suspect that students often feign boredom from fear: they are afraid of questions that are too direct, and so they retreat into a protective nonchalance or into the safety of clichés" (461). He then talks about a method he likes to use, which is to intentionally use a provocative paragraph to engage class discussions. The examples he includes are very interesting because they turn out to be very indirect

responses to the question of using communism in the classroom. Here are the two paragraphs, included in their entirety:

Philip Wylie has said something to the effect that the American mother is the most boring, and consequently the most bored, creature on earth. She is interested in dominating her son and in urging her husband to earn more money. Only in America could so nauseating a custom as Mother's Day become established. Congress should pass a resolution: Mom is a jerk.  
(461)

And:

People who work hard will rise to the top in business and will earn a lot of money. Poor people are stupid or lazy or both. Wealth and intelligence go together. Intelligent people should have more power. In fact, we'd be a lot better off if we didn't worry about poor people so much. The right to vote and the right to hold office should be restricted to people who have an I.Q. of at least 140.

Both of these paragraphs, Sylvester argues, are poorly written and are designed only to provoke "genuine interest" on the part of students, in order to help them "find their own subjects" (462). But what is finally most interesting about them is their content, both of which are at least indirectly about the philosophy of communism. This article may be the most progressive of all the responses because it works subtly toward engaging students with social concerns and it does so in a less authoritarian way by making it an interesting passage for students.

John Milton (if that really is his name!) approaches the subject from another angle. He argues that the primary reason many do not use controversial materials in the classroom is that they lead “inevitably to impassioned and illogical discussion, to a battle of prejudices which can, in turn, lead only to trouble” (462). But Milton argues that this result provides the teacher with “a wonderful opportunity for tempering passionate prejudice with logic, while retaining the authentic feeling and drive which almost always accompany the discussion of controversial subjects” (462). He moves from this to a description of the way that he can get students to realize that while they object to communism, they often do not know why. He contends that Koestler’s The God that Failed is a good book for students to read because it is about writers who once believed in communism, but who no longer do. This argument, that we need to more fully understand communism in order to more fully defeat it, shows faith in the power of reason to stand outside of the realm of persuasion. It conflates communist thought with passionate, illogical thought. By defeating illogical thought and tempering passions, it assumes, teachers can help defeat communism. This idea parallels the central tenets of the Institute of Propaganda Analysis.

Robert Palmer Saalback, the final writer in the symposium, argues that an often-ignored reason that teachers would not want to teach about controversial subjects is because

it is no part of their philosophy to consider any question really unsettled; they may feel that what is needed is to teach ‘the truth.’ Truth, to them, is not a matter of debate; it is to be found in ‘tradition’ as they interpret

tradition and involves the Parmenidean belief that reality is essentially timeless and unchanging, that truth is absolute for all times and places, and that we need only discover it. Such a view is authoritarian; it sees the answers to educational problems in the acceptance of authority—perhaps Plato, perhaps Thomas Aquinas, perhaps (even) Hitler. (462)

This statement has tremendous implications for our study as well because it reminds us of Raymond B. Allen's epistemological assumptions about the university. Allen pretends to be scientific, but relies instead on an authoritarian view of knowledge to suppress radical inquiry. "Such a view is not scientific," Saalback argues, "for it does not set up its hypotheses tentatively or look upon truth as something still to be found. Its error seems to me to be in assimilating empirical truth to logical truth and in overemphasizing the importance of the latter" (463).

Then Saalback asks and answers the following question:

'Does the concept of an American democratic education leave room for such an authoritarian view?' Here the answer seems obvious: if authoritarianism were compatible with democracy, our constitution would have no need for checks and balances, our political arena could be served by one party only, and the three branches of our government could be put together under one head. (464)

Arguing that if we wanted our institutions to be democratic as well as scientific, "we would insist on the free flow of all opinions in and out of schools so as to make qualified citizens of a democratic state" (464), Saalback gives us insight

into our understandings of democracy today. If we want today to “encourage independent thinking and to encourage effective communication of such thought” (464), we must still wrestle with how we can do this in the face of what composition expects of us. Many of the same conflicts exist for us today, and he points to an interesting resolution:

In what better way can we estimate the student’s grasp of his facts and the validity of his logical deduction than by using subjects which admit of the presentation of a point of view with which some of us will disagree? It is in controversy that the mind is whetted; it learns quickly that, to defend a point, it must be careful to gather all necessary data and present it carefully. (464)

Here, Saalback attempts to reconnect the empirical with both ethics and dialectic. His response may do the best job of bringing the best of the empirical together with the best of the humanist and progressive.

The symposium of controversial issues that College English published in 1954 brings together many of the issues brought forward in the last two chapters, as well as those in the earlier part of this chapter. Weisinger’s proposal for first-year composition used critiques of democracy to help strengthen students’ and faculty’s conceptions of the democratic process. Like Saalback, Weisinger believed that academic process could bring students to a fuller conception of democracy only if it contained the specific agenda of interrogating and more fully defining the construct of democracy. He did not believe, as Raymond B. Allen did, that academics had to hold views which, shaped by the accumulation of

tested evidence, are subject to no dictation from outside the mind of the holder (19), but had faith instead—like the contemporary John Milton—that democracy would win out in a free exchange of ideas.

Weisinger did not fear dissent, but encouraged it instead. Raymond B. Allen argued that “if a University ever loses its dispassionate objectivity and incites or leads parades, it will have lost its integrity as an institution and abandoned the timeless, selfless quest of truth... It is for this reason that a teacher has a special obligation to deal in a scholarly and scientific way with controversial questions...” (93). Weisinger, seven years before Allen made this speech, wanted academics to deal with controversial questions in an ethical way, and to bring into question the methods of scientists. Saalback wanted to accomplish this again more than a decade later.

In this symposium, scholars attempted to pose questions of ethics and dialectic, *i.e.*, questions of rhetoric, back into the public forum, but this could only be done after Communist professors had been removed from the equation. Allen ensured that membership in the Communist Party was outside the realm of academic debate. Most universities—especially state supported ones—followed this precedent. The NCTE reasserted this precedent in order to argue more effectively for teachers’ rights to use whatever methods and materials in the classroom would bring about better teaching. While at this point in our history, the question of whether or not Communist professors should have been allowed to teach in our institutions may be purely academic, I believe that universities should have backed the AAUP’s argument and allowed Communist professors to keep

their jobs, providing they had broken no laws. If it had been proven that any of these professors had used their positions of power to proselytize in the classroom, then academic tenure committees could have addressed those individual cases. In any case, Communist Party membership was not sufficient grounds for removal.

I am willing to concede the point, however, that it would have been nearly impossible for individual professors to stand up for the rights of this small minority in our institutions. Had we stood up collectively, we might be able to more effectively steer the direction of our field today against other types of administrative pressures, but this is merely an idealistic afterthought. Because of the pressures of Red Scare politics, it is possible that leftists had little choice but to make concessions to the political climate. The AAUP's absolute inertia, their failure to respond to the firings of hundreds of tenured and untenured faculty across the country, is a tragic story too long and too complex to take up in this project.<sup>33</sup> Suffice it to say that academics had little or no support in this matter, and it is certainly much easier to see now what could have been done differently.

There is, however, the final matter of what materials and methods should be encouraged in the composition classroom today. These issues, which resonate directly with the historical period in which we have been immersed, still feel remarkably current—especially when we consider the range of debates that emerged in the '90s about the function of composition in the university. The conclusion of this work, therefore, is dedicated to the role of first-year

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<sup>33</sup> See Schrecker's No Ivory Tower, pp 308-337.

composition as it relates to empiricism, progressivism, and humanism in university epistemology.

## **Conclusion: Humanism, Empiricism, Progressivism, and Composition**

Curriculum materials and methods of first-year composition have been a site of contention for as long as composition courses have been required. This dissertation has illustrated what shape this contention took during the early Cold War era. In the years 1934-1954, the political atmosphere curbed teachers' freedom to use the best elements of humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies. This repression cannot fail to remind us of more recent arguments about the materials and methods allowed in first-year composition. In the early 1990s, Maxine Hairston published a highly controversial essay in The Chronicle of Higher Education that argued against making the required writing course at the University of Texas at Austin a course on racism and sexism. This controversy received nationwide attention, as the Texas State legislature ultimately stepped in and forbade the curriculum. A decade later, controversies about the role of politics in university classrooms have emerged again after 9/11. While there is not space in the conclusion of this work to outline the full complexities of these recently emerging arguments, we can connect these discussions to the ways that composition and communication scholars responded to the politically repressive early Cold War era. From these connections, we can speculate on what aims and methods we should, as compositionists, assert in a post 9/11 environment.

In 1950, in the midst of Red Scare politics, composition and communication scholars argued for a set of objectives that were connected to the broader social and cultural sphere. Composition and communication scholars wanted students to be able to present logical and organized essays, but both

communication and composition scholars acknowledged, in some way, that these concepts had to be connected to social contexts. Both camps wanted students to be able to distinguish between different appeals, but the assumptions held by teachers of composition and communication courses were often different from one another. Generally speaking, communication scholars favored the analysis and production of texts that had more immediate social purposes. Their methods were also more permissive, working with the assumption that students produce better writing when they are more actively engaged in their learning processes. While some humanist scholars in the composition camp were more comfortable teaching essay genres to students, others saw in literature a way of bringing students to more forceful and effective expression.

It is difficult, looking back at the early years of CCCC, to directly translate these aims and methods to composition studies today. Argumentation was not at the center of composition theory as it is now at many universities. Kenneth Burke's 1951 proposal is an early argument for placing rhetoric at the center of composition and communication courses. It upsets the binary between composition and communication by providing a method for reading both literary and nonliterary texts as forms of persuasion. Furthermore, his proposal connects writing more directly to ethics through the principle of identification.

If we believe what composition historians tell us, it will not be until the sixties and beyond that this type of social-epistemic rhetoric will gain any ground at all in the academy. Berlin's last work reflects frustration at what little progress we, as scholars dedicated to social justice, have gained in the field of composition

and rhetoric. The binary between rhetoric and poetics continues to impose its clandestine violence on those who have not had the luxury of being part of the dominant culture in the United States. Proposals such as the one at the University of Texas at Austin hoped to confront this problem directly by placing issues of race and gender at the very center of first-year composition. While this proposal was grounded in some part of composition and rhetoric theory, it lost sight of public and administrative expectations about the purpose and function of writing instruction in the academy.

Maxine Hairston attempted to address these expectations when she asserted her beliefs about the objectives for first-year writing. “As a writing specialist and teacher for 20 years and as a former president of the Conference on College Composition and Communication,” Hairston writes,

I believe required college writing courses should teach students to:

- Use writing as a tool for discovering and organizing knowledge.
- Become critical thinkers by learning to articulate their ideas in writing and then refine those ideas through revision.
- Become confident writers who use logic and rhetoric to communicate their thoughts clearly. (B1)

While the UT Austin proposal fails to speak directly to student writing-related needs, student-centeredness is readily apparent in Hairston’s response. In the first objective, students are to use writing as a form of inquiry, a tool for coming to judgments. In the second and third objectives, students are to articulate *their* ideas and communicate *their* thoughts by using logic and rhetoric. Generally

speaking, Hairston's emphasis on students' interests and concerns reflects the progressive emphasis on working with individual student needs, interests, and values. This commendable emphasis places her objectives in what early communication scholars called "the permissive."

For our purposes, Hairston's proposal is important because it shows that composition can still use permissive epistemology to protect itself from conservative critiques. From the conservative perspective, a required composition course based on the subject matter of race and gender lends itself to a leftist indoctrination of students. Given this rhetorical situation, it makes sense to emphasize permissive goals in a public forum. By accusing the writers of the UT Austin proposal of retreating "from everything we've learned about teaching writing in the past 15 years" (B1), she presents composition studies as a more permissive discipline.

While she is correct to point out that our research has proven that students write better when they can work with their own interests, she fails to connect her objectives to an important component of first-year composition: introducing students to the type of writing they will be required to do in the academy. Shortly after the UT Austin controversy, Donald Lazare published an essay that addresses this problem and presents a solution that he hopes will give both liberals and conservatives what they want in terms of first-year composition. In "Teaching the Political Conflicts: A Rhetorical Schema," he argues that a primary reason that the University of Texas at Austin (and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst) experienced disputes over whether or not they could address racism and

sexism in first-year composition courses was that “little basis has been established within the discipline of composition delineating either a theoretical framework or ethical guidelines for dealing with political controversies in writing courses” (194). While he is certainly correct to point out that we have not established a stable ground in our field for dealing with political controversy, this study suggests that there has been, historically, an attempt to suppress the establishment of this ground since our field’s very beginnings.

Lazare proposes that we use Gerald Graff’s theory of “teaching the conflicts” in the first-year composition classroom. This way, composition instructors could introduce

as explicit subject matter, the issues of political partisanship and bias, as examples of the subjective, socially constructed elements in perceptions of reality and of the way ideology consciously or unconsciously pervades teaching, learning, and other influential realms of public discourse, including news reporting, mass culture, and of course political rhetoric itself. (195)

By making language and ideology an explicit subject in the first-year composition classroom, Lazare believes that “the left agenda of prompting students to question the subjectivity underlying socially constructed modes of thinking can be reconciled with the conservative agenda of objectivity and nonpartisanship” (196). Bias can be transformed in this environment “through dialectical exchanges with those of differing ideologies” (196). This may work well in theory, but I do not believe that his proposal goes far enough toward using the

best of humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies in the first-year composition classroom. The reasons for this will become clear when we investigate the practical aspects of his proposal.

Lazare, like composition scholars in the past, turns to General Semantics for a solution to the problem of dealing with controversial topics in the classroom. Instead of using this theory to get students to realize how “judgments stop thoughts” and that “reports are the highest form of persuasion,” however, he has students consider the definitions—denotations and connotations—of controversial terms in order to direct students to the ways in which these terms are used for rhetorical purposes.<sup>34</sup> By having students investigate how the meanings of controversial terms shift according to their rhetorical contexts, he avoids the trappings of objectivism. In fact, by having students interrogate definitions and how they are used, he shows that pure objectivity is impossible.

This opening unit then proceeds to three closely related ones. The first explores the psychological blocks to critical thinking. The goal of this unit works with “the hypothesis that many students have lived all their lives in a parochial circle of people who all have pretty much the same set of beliefs, so that they are inclined to accept a culturally conditioned consensus of values as objective, uncontested truth” (200). As it was in Kenneth Burke’s proposal, objectivity and its impossibility becomes the subject of the course, encouraging students to see the ways that “we are all inclined to tailor our ‘objective’ beliefs to the shape of

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<sup>34</sup> Lazare suggests the following controversial terms: “conservatism,” “liberalism,” “radicalism,” “right wing,” “left wing,” “fascism,” “plutocracy,” “capitalism,” “socialism,” “communism,” “Marxism,” “patriotism,” “democracy,” “totalitarianism,” “freedom,” and “free enterprise.” (197-98)

our self-interest” (200). The second unit mirrors the epistemological assumptions of the first unit, but helps students learn to recognize these tendencies in the texts of authorities (journalists, scholars, researchers, politicians, business leaders, etc.). The third unit then moves students toward locating these biases in a subject that is of interest to them.

When we lay out what Lazare wants to accomplish in this type of composition class, we can see that he translates many of the objectives of composition in 1950 into the more rhetorically based conceptions of first-year composition we have today. He shows students that truth is related to audience through persuasion and teaches them to recognize this aspect of persuasion in the writings of other people.

As a way of making sure that his readers do not think his proposal is an “invitation to total relativity or skepticism” (202),<sup>35</sup> Lazare makes it clear, as he nears the end of his proposal, that

students are asked in the conclusion to their term papers not to make a final and absolute judgment on which side is right and wrong about the issue at hand, but to make a balanced summary of the strong and weak points made by each of the limited number of sources they have studied, and then to make—and support—their judgment about which sources have presented the best-reasoned case and the most thorough refutation of the other side’s arguments. (202)

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<sup>35</sup> This, we may remember, was the criticism that Kenneth Oliver made about teaching methods based on General Semantics.

This gesture ties in directly to academic discourse conventions and the expectation on the part of academic audiences that writers give reasoned arguments and support. This focus also helps the teachers of the course to separate political beliefs from their grading because students are graded in this schema on “the quality of students’ support for their judgments—regardless of what those judgments may be” (202).

I generally believe that Lazare’s proposal begins to bring together some of the best elements of empiricism with the best of humanism. In his schema, students are invited to think of themselves as researchers engaged in a limited study and are required to come to some judgment based on the data they have in front of them. This reflects some of the best that an empirical teaching philosophy has to offer us in the field of composition. This proposal also engages an element of humanism, in that it encourages students to engage in self-dialectic based on their readings of cultural texts—in this case, texts with more immediate social purposes. The extent to which this proposal could be considered progressive would depend on two things. First, it would depend on what extent that students were allowed to find their own topics and questions about these issues in the classroom. Second, it would depend on how well students engage the social realm, how much students are thrown into dialectic with other members of the class and finally to what extent this dialectic could be brought into engagement with the broader social sphere.

It is unfortunate that Lazare does not address these two points in his proposal. Hairston’s reassertion of the student-centered focus in composition

studies cannot be overemphasized. The primary danger of introducing political topics into the composition classroom is that it threatens to circumscribe this essential component of good writing instruction. When introducing topics into the composition classroom, we must make sure that we are aiding, not inhibiting, the invention process of students. We also have to make sure that the texts we introduce into our classes provide a wide enough spectrum of opposing viewpoints for students to be able to find their own places within them.

With this in mind, I would like for us to consider, as a way of concluding this project, two final objectives, ones that logically follow from Hairston and Lazare's discussions of first-year composition. These objectives are to have students:

- as democratic citizens, listen to, understand, and consider opposing viewpoints, and
- discriminate between arguments that are worth affirming and those that are not worth affirming in a democracy.

Under even the most ideal circumstances, these objectives are harder to achieve. They more explicitly move students into citizenship, finding one's place in and participating in the democratic community to which we all belong. Lazare's proposal, fundamentally humanist in nature, addresses the first of these two by creating a final project that requires students to consider all sides of an issue before coming to judgment about who made the most reasonable suggestion. His proposal fails, however, to address the final, most progressively oriented objective.

In a democratic classroom, very fruitful discussions and writings can and should emerge around the topic of what type of arguments can be affirmed and what types of arguments cannot be affirmed in a democracy. It is through this question that we, as composition teachers, can still seek to improve society through education. As early as 1939, Herbert Weisinger argued that “a university in a democracy should teach the meaning of democracy.” It is far better for us in the field of composition and rhetoric today to use this argument against the recurrent elements of Red Scare politics that continue to suppress the best potential of composition classes, the pressures that promise to make “current-traditional rhetoric” into a paradigm I would like to dub “recurrent-traditional rhetoric.”

Our purpose in this investigation, after all, is not what John McCumber claims is his in Time in the Ditch. While McCumber explicitly calls for a philosophical approach that would, in his words, “*enrage* Raymond B. Allen” (132, *italics his*), I contend that this gives polemicists like Allen too much power. To structure our writing courses in America on the basis of what would enrage the more conservative elements of our culture today only feeds into the type of ideological battle they seem to want, a battle that is based in metaphors of fear and violence.

Our courses should be based on principles, not on reactions. That is why I contend that what we want, no matter how repressive or permissive the political climate becomes, is the freedom to establish a contextually bound relationship between humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies in the first-

year composition classroom. While Weisinger believed that scientific method alone would help ensure that our teaching not become propagandistic, which may be another way of saying it would help ensure that teachers not indoctrinate their students, I contend that it is through the balance between humanism, empiricism, and progressivism that indoctrination—and unwarranted accusations of indoctrination—can be best avoided.

For our purposes, the balance between these three teaching philosophies will help us to draw clearer, more distinct lines between teaching from our own perspectives and indoctrination. If students are to fully engage the possibilities of the rhetorical tradition, they have to be introduced to a wide range of arguments. Therefore, the humanist reliance on cultural texts and the dialectic those texts generate in students is essential. The progressive turn toward the social helps the teacher avoid indoctrination by ensuring that she or he is not providing all of the perspectives in the classroom. In this way, our perspectives will take some part in shaping what we teach, but by dialoging with our students and by keeping our students in dialog with one another, we may even find that our own perspectives change. Empiricism allows us to engage in limited and definable methods of proving knowledge. As set forth in Lazare's proposal, the establishment of clear objectives and ways of assessing those objectives also allows us to keep our perspectives from getting in the way of grading our students fairly. On a less practical note, empiricism also gives us methods to arrive at and standards by which to judge truth, as these can be mutually agreed and or agreed-to-be-disagreed upon, in the classroom.

While this relationship can be described theoretically, it is very difficult to achieve in actual practice. This is not surprising. “Rhetoric,” as Aristotle made clear in his treatise on the subject, “is a [counterpart] to the art of dialectic” (1.1). It also happens to be, if we take Richard Weaver’s word for it, an offshoot of ethical studies.<sup>36</sup> Any system of composition studies that fails to introduce students to the full range of rhetoric gives students a limited frame for seeing how the writing process relates to their roles as democratic citizens. This means that we, as composition teachers, must create the most democratic atmosphere possible in our classrooms. The biggest difficulty for teachers will be to determine what balance between these three teaching philosophies is needed in each particular case. Nevertheless, assessing the individual needs of students is one of our most important responsibilities, and just because it is a difficult one does not mean that we should not embark upon it.

This historical study has shown the ways that the early Cold War atmosphere circumscribed writing instruction by reducing humanist, empirical, and progressive teaching philosophies to formalist, objectivist, and permissive teaching philosophies, respectively. These reductions made the already difficult task of achieving the objectives that CCCC asserted at its first meeting impossible. By the mid-fifties, however, domestic anticommunism quieted in the American political arena. Cronin argues that it was the success of the American economy that softened Red Scare politics (75). McCarthy may have been useful for getting a Republican administration elected in 1952, but by 1954 he was

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<sup>36</sup> See Richard Weaver’s Ethics of Rhetoric for this translation of Aristotle’s well-known phrase.

simply an embarrassment to the Senate, House, and President alike. Although the Senate censured McCarthy in 1954, the effects of Red Scare politics on the field of English did not simply disappear when McCarthy fell. That is why we must, in a post 9/11 environment, continue to work against the ways that the political atmosphere threatens to circumscribe our abilities to be effective and ethical teachers.<sup>37</sup>

In an as-of-yet-unpublished manuscript titled Toward a Vocative History: The Dialectic of Politics and Ethics in English Studies, James Comas connects the political atmosphere of the late forties and early fifties to changes in the field of English. Though his study deals primarily with literary criticism and how the early forties and fifties brought about New Criticism, his discussion of politics and ethics proves to be essential to the conclusion of this study:

Since ethics and politics name basic categories of human relations, we would have to acknowledge that much of our lives are spent responding to ethical and political matters. Moreover, the history of English Studies tells us, in ways we often forget or no longer hear, that scholars and teachers have been especially attentive to “ethical” or “political” matters throughout the range of their professional duties. (9-10)

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<sup>37</sup> My decision to engage the topic of Cold War effects on university writing instruction was affirmed after the publication of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni’s Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America and What Can Be Done About It. In the name of “academic freedom, quality, and accountability,” the ACTA employs what appears to be the same browbeating and bullying tactics as the worst of our country’s Red Scare demagogues.

Comas hopes to reintroduce a more dialectical relationship between ethics and politics in English Studies. My concerns in the conclusion of this chapter reflect his, but apply more specifically to first-year composition, a course that finally has to be more concerned with ethics because it is required. As teachers of one of the few courses required of all incoming students, we must continue to argue for the importance of a rhetorical education that engages the social and political sphere. We cannot, however, lose sight of the ethics of teaching as well. A better vision of democracy may prove to be the only ground on which we should make our case.

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