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By

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NETWORK EPISTEMIC RHETORIC:
COMPOSITION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

The paradigm of social epistemic rhetoric, established by James Berlin, is a rhetoricized and historicized approach to textual analysis and production which takes as its purpose the education of students for democratic engagement. However, a number of scholars such as Taylor and Terranova argue that a new historical period, marked by the rapid globalization and informatization of society, may now be emerging. As such, social epistemic rhetoric may not offer an adequate response to the emerging conditions of a globalized, network culture.

This project will begin with an examination of social epistemic rhetoric in relation to the scholarship of computers and composition, complexity theory and the post-process movement. Next, the critical methodology suggested by Berlin, as well as the theoretical work of Debord, Foucault and Hardt and Negri, will be drawn upon to analyze forms of power, subjectivity, and resistance in the digital discourses of online social networks and personal weblogs. The project will then turn to an examination of the importance of student-centered pedagogy to composition in the digital age, and conclude with a discussion of "network epistemic rhetoric"— a refiguration of social epistemic rhetoric for the 21st century— and its pedagogical application within the context of a composition course focused on globalization and the university.

Chapter One: Introduction

I was first drawn to the field of composition and rhetoric because of the discipline's emphasis on pedagogy and its commitment to the practical application of research and theory in the classroom; however, as my studies progressed, rhetorical theory and the history of the field itself began to interest me. As someone with a background in literature and an interest in literary theory (but who wondered, "What on earth one might *do* with that theory?"), I became particularly interested in James Berlin's work, which helped me understand the relationship between English studies and composition, between rhetoric and the poetic. Further, his writings elucidated the relationship between poststructuralist theory and composition/ rhetoric theory, pointing to ways that postmodern thought might have a very tangible, practical application in the composition classroom.

Meanwhile, I was introduced to and profoundly influenced by Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Debord's dystopian assessment of what is now known as the late capitalist mode of production and the social and cultural conditions that have arisen from it greatly impacted my understanding of culture and economics. He argues that in societies "in which the modern conditions of production prevail," life "presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. The images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream, and the former unity of life is lost forever" (p. 12). In the society of the spectacle, all human interaction is mediated by technology and individuals can find unity and understanding only through the common stream of images, sounds

and words upon which all society gazes. This unity, however, is false because it can only be found in a stream of technological representations that mediates and therefore prevents actual human connection. But the spectacle is not simply the perpetuation of images in the media—it is "both the result and goal of the dominant mode of production…it represents the dominant model of life" (Debord, 1967, p. 12). In other words, the spectacle describes both economic production and the social and cultural manifestations which serve to further reify and perpetuate the current economic conditions.

Debord described the society of the spectacle forty years ago, but his observations still ring true in many ways today. If fact, if his analysis of the cultural state of 1967 falls short in comparison to that of 2007, it is only in his assessment of the intensity and totality of the spectacle—if anything, our society has become all the more spectacular. We live in a world of surveillance, control, and spectacle, wherein the globalized free market increases daily the gap between the rich and the poor (on both the national and international level), and this process is facilitated, validated, and normalized by a media consolidated under the control of an ever-diminishing number of corporate powers. Further, the reach and speed of electronic media has been exponentially increased by the rise of the Internet. Spectacles become ever more dazzling, and access to them is ever more available, as the 21st century is marked by proliferation of wireless portable devices[1] that, on one hand, allow individuals constant access to media sources that provide spectacular entertainment, and on the other hand, allow corporate and

[1] See Castells, 2004, 7.

government powers access to the individual, blurring the boundaries between work and leisure and providing the means for constant surveillance.[2]

Since 1967, we have seen the rise of what Douglas Kellner calls "media culture." Kellner (2003) writes:

> During the past decades, the culture industries have multiplied media spectacles in novel spaces and sites, and spectacle itself is becoming one of the organizing principles of the economy, polity, society, and everyday life. An Internet-based economy has been developing hi-tech spectacle as a means of promotion, reproduction, and the circulation and selling of commodities, using multi- media and increasingly sophisticated technology to dazzle consumers.
>
> Political and social life is also shaped more and more by media spectacle…Media culture not only takes up expanding moments of contemporary experience, but also provides ever more material for fantasy, dreaming, modeling thought and behavior, and constructing identities (p. 1).

We now live in a society that is structured on every level by spectacular media, as our economy, culture, politics are all shaped by the circulation of images, and identity itself is constructed by knowledge/power that flows through rhizomatic electronic networks. While many saw the Internet initially as a space in which democracy, freedom, and equality could flourish, I will demonstrate throughout this book that this promise has largely remained unfulfilled. It is true that the Web has opened up new avenues of resistance and new ways by which one can gain a voice, and it still offers some potential as a site for counter-hegemonic discourse and action. But I will argue that, on balance, the Internet has done more to strengthen hegemonic power while at the same time dispersing and decentralizing it. The Internet, as it emerged from the late capitalist mode of production, could

[2] See D.N. Rodowick, 2003.

not be a space free from and untainted by this inherently oppressive system. Instead, it helped intensify late capitalism: the spectacle became interactive and privacy became non-existent. As I will argue in detail in later chapters, electronic discourses such as social networking and blogs encourage identification with spectacular culture, identity representation as spectacle, and self-enrollment in networks of surveillance.

The Internet alone was not responsible for the rise of media culture. As Kellner points out, the news media, under ever-increasing corporate influence, become inseparable from the entertainment industry: the political power of the elite is perpetuated and reinforced as political discourse is reduced to name-calling, advertising slogans, and endless debate over hot-button issues, and international conflict is framed as a battle between good and evil and then broadcast as just another form of dazzling entertainment. Thus, the possibility of political action is foreclosed, and one's "freedom" is reduced to choice over which product/image to buy: Ford or Chevy, Fox or CNN, Republican or Democrat?

Berlin recognized that our world was becoming increasingly mediated by images and technology and knew that the field of composition and rhetoric would have a vital role to play in this rapidly evolving society and culture: we must enable our students to critique, as well as produce, the electronic and visual texts that saturate their experience and shape their everyday lives. As Berlin (1996) writes, "In this age of spectacle, democracy will rise or fall on our ability to offer a critical response to these daily experiences" (p. 57). In a society in which the

passive contemplation of digital media has all but replaced direct action and most action only serves to perpetuate the current mode of production, in order for the people to have any chance of gaining agency and power they must have critical awareness of and proficiency in the production of electronic media.

Tragically, Berlin was not able to apply his important work in rhetoric and composition to the network cultures that rapidly began to emerge in the early 1990's. He died suddenly in 1994, before he could bring his systematic, historicized theorization of rhetoric, composition and literacy—what he called "social epistemic rhetoric"—fully to bear on the discourse and culture of the digital age. Although much has happened since 1994, Berlin's ideas still provide a largely effective heuristic by which to engage critically with electronic discourse. However, our network society has evolved to such an extent that some of the assumptions and conclusions that underlie social epistemic rhetoric have not been borne out as neatly in electronic discourse as many in the field would have liked. In other words, it initially appeared, according to early scholarship on computers and composition, that utopian, poststructuralist theories of discourse would be made manifest in the digital realm. Digital discourse, however, has not been as empowering as many would have liked. In fact, I argue that in many ways, advances in electronic networked communications have more often resulted in the intensification and reach of hegemonic power.

On the other hand, the emergence of a globalized, network society has opened up the possibility of the development of a new kind of democracy. Creating and fostering a democratic society is a central goal of social epistemic

rhetoric. Berlin (1996) criticizes progressive educators of the early 20th century for their assumption that a democratic government in fact existed in America, and argues that democracy remains limited and endangered in the postmodern period. He offers a model of postmodern democracy that may be more viable now, because of rapidly changing technological and societal conditions, than it was at the time of Berlin's work. Drawing on the model of democracy offered by Iris Marion Young (1990), Berlin (1996) offers a definition of democracy "based on the recognition of difference" (100). He writes:

> Traditional notions of civic discourse have constructed fictional political agents that leave behind their differences to assume a persona that is rational and universal in thought and language. In a postmodern world, no such subject exists. Democracy, then, becomes radically participatory, as the heterogeneous voices that constitute any historical moment are allowed a hearing (p.100).

Such an understanding of democracy continues to be a useful conception of what democracy *should* look like in the digital age. In fact, as Micheal Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, the emerging conditions of our increasingly globally connected and mediated world make the attainment of this kind of democracy all the more possible.

They assert that the emergence of "network power," while further consolidating and strengthening the hegemonic order, has also opened up the possibility of a new kind of collective resistance and democracy: the multitude. They write:

> You might say…that there are two faces to globalization. On one face, Empire spreads globally its network of hierarchies and divisions that maintain order through new mechanisms of control and constant conflict. Globalization, however, is also the creation of new circuits of cooperation and collaboration that stretch across nations and continents and allow an

> unlimited number of encounters…[I]t provides the possibility that, while remaining different, we discover the commonality that enables us to communicate and act together
> (p. xiii).

As I will examine in greater depth over the course of this book, the rapid advance of globalization and digital technology, while creating new forms of power and control, has also opened up new avenues of communication and connection. Communication, knowledge and power are now organized rhizomatic networks that allow for the emergence of the multitude, a new kind of democratic social organization that maintains difference while enabling (global!) connection and action. The network society that has arisen since Berlin's death now perhaps offers the means to realize his vision of democracy.

If we in the field of composition and rhetoric hope to encourage and contribute to the project of the multitude, we must examine and critique—always within the context of the material and cultural conditions of the historical moment— newly emerging discursive networks, and the forms of social organization these networks bring about. I hope to demonstrate that social epistemic rhetoric, while it is still an immensely useful conception of rhetoric, must be revised and supplemented if we are to effectively respond to the cultural, economic and social conditions of our networked society.

Social Epistemic Rhetoric and the Refiguration of English Studies

Before continuing, we must establish what exactly is meant by the term "social epistemic rhetoric." The paradigm of rhetoric and literacy that James Berlin labels social epistemic rhetoric emerges from both institutional and disciplinary critiques within the field of composition and rhetoric. Berlin

establishes social epistemic rhetoric as a paradigm of rhetoric, composition, and literacy that, in the mid-eighties, arises out of critiques of English studies as a whole, as well as of the newly formed discipline of composition and rhetoric. Berlin uses the term "paradigm" as defined by Williams (1983): "a characteristic mental hypothesis" (p. 307). In other words, Berlin uses the term "paradigm" to denote particular lines of thought in English studies as well as composition and rhetoric. From Berlin's point of view, the paradigm of social epistemic rhetoric characterizes a general theory of writing and rhetoric that a number of scholars tend to work from, although they may not agree on everything. The paradigms that Berlin describes are tied to particular historical periods, although they may overlap and compete. (For example, the paradigm of social epistemic rhetoric emerges after and in response to the process paradigm of composition, while nonetheless maintaining many of the insights of the process movement.) Therefore, Berlin does not use "paradigm" in the Kuhnian sense, as a new period of scientific (or scholarly) thought that is completely incommensurable with the preceding period. Finally, social epistemic rhetoric can most specifically be understood as denoting *Berlin's* characteristic mental hypothesis regarding composition and rhetoric. That is, we can consider (as we will most often in this book) social epistemic rhetoric as Berlin's own specific, systematic theorization of composition and rhetoric. In order to proceed, however, we must consider Berlin's historicized account of English studies and composition and rhetoric, so as to understand both Berlin's method of historicization—which will be a focus of

critique in a later chapter— and the circumstances (according to Berlin) from which social epistemic rhetoric arose.

On the institutional level, social epistemic rhetoric is a response to the dominant paradigms of literacy established in (the U.S. university curriculum) English studies in the early 20th century (Berlin, 1996). On a disciplinary level, social epistemic rhetoric (according to Berlin) emerges in response to the cognitivist and expressivist movements within the field of composition and rhetoric (Berlin, 1992). Berlin (1996) asserts that, on an institutional level, social epistemic rhetoric develops as a progressive response to three major paradigms of literacy that emerged in the university at the turn of the 20th century: two of the three paradigms, the "literacy of the scientific meritocracy" and the "literacy of liberal-culture," reinforced the status quo, reproducing current economic and cultural relations, while the third paradigm, "democratic literacy," although truly committed to the advancement of democratic values, was limited by its faith in the egalitarianism of American society and the progress that would result from scientific inquiry (p. 38).

English studies in the literacy of the meritocracy provided practice in reading and writing, the communication skills necessary in business and science. Composition in this curriculum is now known as current-traditional rhetoric, in which heavy emphasis is placed on following formulae and the end product, rather than the process, of writing. Invention is not necessary, as the truth to any matter can be obtained through scientific investigation (Berlin, 1996, p. 30). Language is a set of arbitrary signs that match exactly the external reality that it is

used to communicate (p. 31). Writing is viewed as a transparent medium through which to convey objective fact; knowledge exists apart from the writer; his[3] job is to find the knowledge and transfer it onto the page.

English also played an important, although different, role in the literacy of liberal culture. English studies in this curriculum existed chiefly to preserve the cultural heritage of the elite. As Berlin writes,

> The literacy of liberal culture is based on a conservative ideology that treasures continuity… Only a small minority can achieve the realm of higher truth, and it is this group that must be trusted for leadership in politics and culture. Education ought to be limited to this small group, a natural aristocracy with the potential for genius (1996, p. 35).

The job of English studies was to canonize works deemed worthy by those with taste and a sense of the truth, in order to ensure the continued ascendance of a particular set of values and the individuals who held them. Instruction in composition in this paradigm is unnecessary, as writing is the product of individual genius; those attending the university should naturally possess the ability to write.

Advocates of the third paradigm, democratic literacy, recognized the limitations of the other two literacies, noting that they both served narrow class interests. Those with the third position did agree that universities should train experts to solve cultural and economic problems; however, they believed that higher education existed expressly to reinforce democracy and improve all of society. Those who supported this literacy believed that rhetoric should be taught as a means to prepare citizens for taking action in society; thus, in this paradigm,

[3] University students in this period were overwhelmingly white males.

"Students learn to write in a manner that prepares them for participation in the political life of a democratic society" (p. 36). Writing must take into account the entire rhetorical context: writer, audience and topic as well as the social environment (Berlin, 1996, p. 36). Discourse is not simply for scientific or economic purposes; it is essential to a truly democratic society in which all citizens are given a voice. However, Berlin notes that this view of literacy is limited by its failure to take into account the effects of economic and social arrangements on the political system. It naively assumes a democratic government is in place, when in reality the existing system inherently favors those of a certain class, gender, and race (p. 37). In addition, this understanding of literacy is limited by its trust in power of instrumental reason (and therefore objective knowledge) and a faith that scientific progress would improve the lives of all.

All three of these conceptions of literacy are limited in their attempt to improve society. While the first of these two paradigms, in theory, shifted the purpose of higher education from the preparation of elite men for leadership positions to a concern for the betterment of all society, both forms of literacy maintained and strengthened the power of the highest class.[4] The third paradigm, while truly committed to the advancement of democratic values, was limited by its faith in the egalitarianism of American society and the progress that would result from scientific inquiry. Social epistemic rhetoric, on an institutional level,

[4] Meritocratic literacy may have widened the bourgeoisie, but this was a result of the creation of managers for corporations, which generated wealth primarily for the elite. While those who advocated the literacy of liberal culture may have shifted the core college curriculum from its focus on the languages and literatures of Greek and Latin to works in more widely accessible vernacular, they still believed that culture and politics should be left in the hands of the select few (35).

can perhaps be seen as a return to the era of progressive education, but without the accompanying faith in the objectivity of science, the current state of democracy, and the notion of "progress" itself.

The Social Turn

More specifically, within the field of composition and rhetoric, social epistemic rhetoric emerged out of the disciplinary critiques of the cognitivist and expressivist approaches of the process movement (Berlin, 1988) that marked the "social turn" in composition. Patricia Bizzell (1982) in "Cognition, Convention and Certainty: What We Need to Know About Writing**"** and Berlin (1988) in "Rhetoric and Ideology" criticize the cognitivist approach exemplified in Britton (1975), Emig (1971) and most prominently, Flower and Hayes' (1981) "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing**."** Bizzell and Berlin criticize such research (which attempts to map the cognitive processes of writers through such methods as writing sample analysis and talk aloud protocols) for using a positivist approach that neglects to address the social, cultural, and political contexts that always surround the writing act. On the other hand, Berlin criticizes the expressivist approach of theorists such as Peter Elbow (1973) which, although it recognizes the writing act as occurring within cultural and material contexts, focuses too heavily on individual expression, thus preventing writing instruction from teaching the value of collective social action.

From the mid-eighties onward, there emerged a number of composition and rhetoric scholars, influenced by postmodern and Marxist theory as well as theories of critical pedagogy, who could be considered social epistemic

rhetoricians. As such, social epistemic rhetoric denotes a wide range of rhetorical and pedagogical practices, although Berlin (1988, 1992) establishes general epistemological and theoretical assumptions from which the paradigm operates. Social epistemic rhetoric is informed by a poststructuralist understanding of signification and subjectivity that emerges from postmodern theorists such as Derrida, Althusser, and Foucault. Discourse does not exist as an independent container apart from objective facts and the individual who wishes to express them; instead, discourse constructs both the knowledge it communicates and the subject who deploys it. Further, the subject is not stable or coherent but is instead formed by numerous competing discourses. The ultimate goals of social epistemic rhetorical thought are political; its pedagogy aims to enable civic engagement and democratic practice. Kenneth Bruffee (1984), in articles such as "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" is perhaps the earliest advocate in the field of composition and rhetoric for a social constructionist approach to writing pedagogy and theory, although this pedagogical approach can be traced as far back to progressivists such as Dewey (Berlin, 1996). A social constructionist approach can also be seen in such works as Lunsford and Ede's (1990) *Single Text, Plural Authors*, James Porter's (1992) *Audience and Rhetoric*, and Deborah Brandt's (1990) *Literacy as Involvement*, in which she argues that literacy can be seen as "a growing metacommunicative ability— an increasing awareness of the control over the social means by which people sustain discourse, knowledge, and reality…" (p. 32). Burke (1969) is perhaps the first scholar of composition and rhetoric to note the role discourse plays in constructing individuals that occupy

various subject positions simultaneously, noting that the study of rhetoric is the consideration of the "ways in which individuals are at odds with each other, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with another" (p. 22). This external process is mirrored internally: identifications with a variety of motives are made within, and "you get a complex person with many voices" (Burke, 1969, p. 38). An understanding of the individual as fragmented and heterogeneous, inhabiting multiple subject positions at once, is endorsed by a wide range of composition and rhetoric scholars including Bizzell (1981), Bartholomae (1985), and Faigley (1992). Such scholars argue that the multi-perspectival construction of the subject is essential to the encouragement of a diverse and tolerant society, for a myopic acknowledgement of particular subject positions silences diverse voices and limits political agency. Further, the acknowledgment that rhetoric, and therefore knowledge and subject positions, are always already ideological (Berlin, 1992) links social epistemic rhetoric to the theories and practices of Marxist cultural studies and critical pedagogy. The political commitment that underlies the theory and pedagogy of social epistemic rhetoric, exemplified in Berlin's (1996) call for historicization and semiotic critique, emerges out of the cultural studies of Barthes' (1972) *Mythologies* and Hall (1980), and the critical pedagogy of Freire (1970) and Giroux (1988).

Computers, Writing and Social Epistemic Rhetoric

Of course, as the rise of computer technology generally coincides with the social turn in composition, much of the field's scholarship concerning technology has been informed by the theory and practice of social epistemic rhetoric, which is

in turn informed by postmodern theory and critical pedagogy. In fact, many of the central tenets of social epistemic rhetoric have been confirmed by or manifested in digital discourse. Further, much of the early research on computers and writing was celebratory of the potential offered by technology to help writing teachers accomplish the goals of social epistemic rhetoric. For example, Lester Faigley (1992) asserts in "The Achieved Utopia of the Networked Classroom" that the computer-mediated classroom offers a hypertextual space in which disciplinary power can be disrupted and formerly silenced marginalized (female, non-white) people can find voice. More theoretically, Richard Lanham (1993) writes of the reorganization of knowledge and the reevaluation of social decorum (which includes oppressive cultural norms) that will result as computers make us more aware of the ways in which discourse shapes knowledge and reality. While these early notions of the egalitarian power of the Web were and continue to be affirmed in some instances, it cannot be said that these ideals have been generally achieved.

Nevertheless, social epistemic rhetoric offers a powerful heuristic for the critique of digital discourse and technology. Hawisher and Selfe (1991) offer one of the earliest critiques of the utopian assessment of technology in the writing classroom. They argue that, since computers are artifacts that are imbued with the ideologies of the dominant culture, they often exacerbate rather than solve problems found in traditional writing classes because they encourage teacher lecture and limit student involvement and interaction. Laura Gurak (1997, 2001) shifts this critique outside of the classroom, analyzing the ways in which the

discourse of the Web perpetuates oppressive representations of women and consumer capitalist ideologies.[5] Most recently, Stuart Selber (2004) establishes a systematic pedagogical, curricular, and institutional response to our students' need for multiliteracies: the ability to use, critique, and create within electronic spaces. Gregory Ulmer's (2003) *Internet Invention: From Literacy to Electracy* also establishes a curriculum that will enable students to both critique and create electronic discourse.

All of this scholarship recognizes the (at least partial) construction of knowledge and subjectivity by discourse and a need for a theoretical and pedagogical response that resists the perpetuation of hegemonic values within electronic environments, while engendering civic engagement and democratic practices within those spaces. However, scholarship on computers and writing based on social epistemic rhetoric, or that which doesn't at least explicitly recognize its limitations, may no longer provide an adequate response to the rapidly changing social and economic conditions of the emerging globalized network culture. The emergence of digital discourse confirmed for many the validity of poststructuralist theory (thereby confirming social epistemic rhetorical thought, based as it is on poststructuralism), as it seemed to be the tangible realization of a number of common postmodern observations regarding discourse. Thus, early scholarship on electronic discourse tends to take on a utopian tone, and while a number of optimistic assertions on this topic retain some validity, they are certainly not without their limitations. At first glance, digital discourse

[5] See also Blair and Takayoshi (1999), as well as Nakamura (2002), for analyses of the Web in relation to issues of gender and race, respectively.

seems to confirm some of the central tenets of social epistemic rhetoric in an overwhelmingly positive fashion; a closer look, however, reveals the need to temper one's optimism.

Utopia Achieved?

Berlin suggests that a central practice of social epistemic rhetoric is the analysis of cultural codes. In other words, Berlin advocated the critical analysis of a range of the signifying practices—oral, written, visual and digital—that constitute our experience and society. Just as discourse determines what counts as knowledge, it normalizes particular kinds of cultural practices, thereby reproducing current social and material relations. Berlin argues that it is essential that we acknowledge and critique codes that normalize dominant values and perpetuate the current mode of production. However, as I will illustrate below, digital technology does not call more attention to naturalized discursive codes; instead, electronic discourse now naturalizes the dominant codes. Thus, it is crucial, as Selfe argues, that those in the field of composition and rhetoric pay attention to and critique the ways in which dominant values are privileged and normalized in electronic discourse.

Initially, the emergence of the Web appeared to have made this kind of awareness and critique easier. Richard Lanham noted that the digital technology of the Web profoundly affects the creation, expression, and distribution of humanistic knowledge. This shift is consistent with the view of knowledge presented by social epistemic rhetoric, as this position emphasizes the idea that discourse communities create knowledge through rhetorical acts. According to

Lanham, we are more self-conscious of this construction because communication technology calls attention to the fact that our understanding of "reality" is constituted by discourse (p. 459). Under current-traditional rhetoric language is treated as a transparent medium through which to transmit facts. But as Lanham writes:

> The computer screen constitutes a much more opaque surface altogether…This new self-consciousness affects the organization of humanistic knowledge at the most fundamental level. Both author and audience, citizen and society…become… more self-conscious about themselves, about writing, about how social decorum is constructed (459).

From this point of view, because discourse is mediated by technology in the digital environment of the World Wide Web, the individual has more awareness of his/her language use, as well as the discursive practices of others; such consciousness leads to a greater awareness of the ways in which our understanding of the world or "reality" is shaped by discourse. Social epistemic rhetoric emphasizes this construction, providing a model for the study of the rhetorical creation of knowledge.

It would appear, then, that the digital environment of the Web can help to foster the practice of social epistemic rhetoric, calling attention to the rhetoricity of knowledge and illuminating the processes through which cultural codes, or as Lanham puts it, social decorum, is normalized. Technology supposedly calls attention to the codes themselves, for, as Lanham notes, it makes us self-conscious of discourse itself and more aware of the importance of signifying practices. Thus, the Web offers an environment which enables students to

recognize the ways in which discourse conditions knowledge as well as their own behaviors and identities.

But not so fast. Cynthia Selfe (1999) argues that the technological mediation of discourse has become increasingly naturalized to the point of invisibility in our classrooms and society. In other words, the extra attention Lanham argues that computers bring to the role discourse plays in the construction of cultural, social and economic norms may have only been a passing result of the initial novelty of computer technology. Lanham made the above observations in the early nineties when widespread use the personal computer (and particularly the Internet) was still a relatively new phenomenon. Anyone who has recently taught in a computer-mediated classroom can tell you that computers are not a new or novel phenomenon to the current college student. Like the air they breathe, technology is invisible to our students.

Agency is another central issue of social epistemic rhetoric that must be reexamined in relation to digital technology. Berlin (1996) supports a poststructuralist conception of the self and argues that agency is to be found in the exploration and movement among varying subject positions. Digital technology seems to offer a means to achieve this kind of agency through the creation of alternative subject positions. I argue, over the course of this book, that technology does not necessarily provide this means to achieve agency and that our conception of rhetoric and composition in the digital age must proceed from this understanding. The idea that technology enables the individual to create his or her subject or construct multiple identities and that through their creation these

identities can somehow challenge or resist hegemonic power is problematic from a Foucauldian viewpoint. This notion is further complicated as we move further into what Deleuze (working from Foucault) calls the "control society"—a world that becomes more and more mediated by technology each day.

The belief that the Web provides the ability for one construct his or her own subjectivity has led theorists to argue that the Web also enables individuals to challenge the dominant power by providing a site for the construction of subjectivities that correct or challenge the oppressive identities constituted by the discursive practices of the dominant society. Snyder and McConaghy in "Working the Web in Post-Colonial Australia" note the successful use of the Web by indigenous peoples to create resistant identities and gain voice and agency in post-colonial Australia. The authors discuss the ways in which the Web is used by native peoples not only as a site for straightforward activism—through websites that provide information and forums on native activist groups and resistant actions—but also as a site for the construction of resistant subjectivities. Communications scholars have argued— following the poststructuralist critique of the unified, autonomous subject— that digital technology fosters a conception of the self as comprising multiple and varying subject positions. The fluidity of the self in cyberspace, according to theorists such as Turkle and Bolter, offers the possibility of agency and freedom. An online user enters a new forum and creates a new screen name and a new identity to go with it —sometimes breaking the boundaries of gender or race. Thus, the individual creates multiple subject positions and assumes them according to the online context.

. However, the idea that an individual can construct a subject position runs counter to Foucault's conception of subjectivity. He makes clear that subject positions are created by the discursive formations of institutions and disciplines at a given historical moment and that such positions "can be filled in certain conditions by various individuals" (p. 76). Thus, the argument that the individual—in cyberspace or otherwise— can be the autonomous author of a text, much less a subject position, contradicts Foucault's poststructuralist conception of the subject. Foucault (1982) writes, "[D]iscourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined" (p. 74). Discourse—and discursively constructed identities—are not generated by the will of an autonomous, unified subject; instead, discourse itself constructs the positions that the subject may occupy, thereby determining the manner in which he or she will be fragmented or "dispersed."

The subject becomes even more deeply intertwined with power the further the Digital Age advances. One of the defining characteristics of the period of networked globalization, as Deleuze as well as Hardt and Negri (2000) note, is the aforementioned shift (begun in the postmodern period) from the discipline society to the control society, where power is maintained not only by disciplining individuals but by shaping them from within and without. Foucault asserts (1980) that, in the discipline society (which he argues existed from the 18th century to the early 20th century), the status quo is maintained chiefly by discipline implemented

by various institutions such as jails, the police, and military. However, he also notes that power no longer exists in a hierarchical structure. Instead, power is now biopolitical, and it encompasses and penetrates all life itself (Foucault, 1978; Hardt and Negri, 2000). All social and cultural interactions serve to create and reinforce hegemony. We are not only conditioned by state institutions such as schools (Althusser, 1971) but also shaped and surveilled by our routines at work as well as our interactions with technologies like television during our leisure time (Deleuze, 1990). In these ways, electronic discourse plays a central role in the control society. As Hardt and Negri (2000) suggest, the communications industries "not only organize production on a new scale…but also make its justification immanent…. The communications industries integrate the imaginary and the symbolic within the biopolitical fabric, not merely putting them at the service of power, but integrating them into its very functioning" (p. 33). Communications serve to reify the discourse of the state and the corporation, forcing us to make meaning with the images and language of the only culture: consumer culture.

Composition and rhetoric must play a central role in the analysis and exposure of the ways that digital discourse is shaped by capital and the ways that electronic communications networks naturalize and perpetuate capitalist values. M.J. Braun (2001) argues that the lack of a rigorous analysis of the foundational role of capital in all technology by those in the field of rhetoric and composition has led to an ungrounded hope in the ability of technology to enable and encourage social change. Further, she notes correctly that Berlin (and therefore

social epistemic rhetoric) perpetuates what she calls "democracy hope" by operating on the assumption that networked technology inherently encourages egalitarianism and democracy. Unfortunately, the field's most prominent engagement with network theory up to this point—a *JAC* issue devoted to the work of Mark Taylor—parallels or repeats the mistake against which Braun cautions. In an interview that prefaces the issue, Taylor argues that the continued critique of capitalism within the academy is no longer fruitful—that, for better or worse, we must accept the current economic system. Further, he supports the corporatization of higher education, briefly addressing his own for-profit educational enterprise**.** The articles that follow, for the most part, fail to critique Taylor's assertions and the role of capitalism in relation to network culture is largely ignored. However, as Terranova's work makes clear, capital plays an essential role in not only the emergence of the Internet, but in all of the manifestations of network culture, from communication systems to political organizations.

Terranova's work problematizes much of the utopian rhetoric found in both composition studies and the popular press regarding the Internet's potential to offer a space for resistance to the power of corporate capitalism. As I have noted, much of the early scholarship in composition and computers, including work by Faigley, Lanham and, most importantly for our purposes, Berlin, extolled the democratizing effects of networked technology. Popular discourse concerning the Internet echoed this sentiment, albeit from a neoliberal perspective. The founders of *Wired*, for example, celebrated the libertarian potential of the Internet,

seeing it as a space that encouraged individual freedom and entrepreneurship. A common narrative found both in the scholarship of composition and computers and the discourse of the *Wired* group, although respectively from progressive and neoliberal perspectives, is the shift of the World Wide Web from a utopian, democratic space to a thoroughly commercialized and corporatized space. Gurak (2003), for example, explores the increasing commodification of the Web as it becomes, more than anything else, a place to shop (p. 10). In 1999, *Wired*, decried the shift of the Web from a space for free access to information and individual entrepreneurship to a site for corporately owned content, declaring that the old, exciting Web was dead, and had been replaced by the new Web which was increasingly little more than a platform for corporate media (Terranova, 2004, p. 94).

Terranova's work challenges both versions of this narrative., calling into question both the progressive and neoliberal celebration of the "collective intelligence" facilitated by the Web, which supposedly leads to a non-hierarchical, collaborative restructuring of work and business itself as well as a new gift economy (p. 84-85). From the neoliberal perspective, this gift economy was an expression of the free market that enabled creative, visionary individuals to operate outside the restraints of corporate and governmental norms. On the other hand, critics of neoliberalism praised this new gift economy as an alternative to late capitalism. Terranova argues that networks like the Internet *do* offer the possibility of resistance to cultural and political norms. Such networks are by definition open and dynamic because they are emergent systems: organizations in

which individual behavior cannot be predicted and is liable to change and divergence while connections between individual nodes in the network are maintained (Terranova, 2004, p. 28).[6] Therefore, the possibility of radical divergence, the occurrence of the highly improbable (what Terranova calls the virtual), is always present within a network (p. 20). However, as she argues, these emergent systems, whether the Web or a multitude of people, are nonetheless subsumed and conditioned by the "artificial environment" of capitalism in which they emerge (p. 86). In fact, "collective intelligence," according to Terranova is synonymous with what the Italian Autonomists, following Marx, call the "general intellect": the articulation of humans and machines at the heart of the current mode of production (p. 87). Terranova challenges the belief, from whatever ideological perspective it might come, that there once existed a utopian cyberspace that has been recouped by corporate capitalism. As she writes, "Late capitalism does not appropriate anything: it nurtures, exploits, and exhausts its labor force and its cultural and affective production" (p. 94). Further, Terranova makes clear the limits of any exploration of network theory within the field of rhetoric and composition that does not acknowledge the central role of capital in the emergence of network cultures.

Composition studies that remain tied to the assumptions of social epistemic rhetorical thought— that digital networked technology itself will lead naturally toward a more democratic society, that agency and freedom can be found in the construction and exploration of online identities—can no longer offer

[6] Blakesley and Rickert (2004) use the analogy of a flock of birds to describe emergent systems: "the individual actions of a particular bird are not sufficient to explain the overall behavioral characteristics of the flock" (p. 823).

an adequate response to our networked control society. What is now needed is a historicized account of the emergence of digital network cultures from the perspective of the field of composition and rhetoric. Social epistemic rhetoric can indeed provide a heuristic for examining the rhetorical features of digital discourse and the culture that is emerging from that discourse. It can also help us prescribe pedagogical responses to network cultures, providing us with strategies for teaching students to critique and interact within electronic spaces. However, we must also move beyond social epistemic rhetoric and begin to revise it.

In Chapter Two, I will refigure rhetorical history as an emergent and interconnected carnivalesque narrative rather than a progression of distinct paradigms. Although rhetorical inquiry into digital discourse should be informed by emerging theories surrounding network culture, the insights and critical tools provided by social epistemic rhetoric (and its postmodern theoretical bases) should not be abandoned. Categories leak: just as a stable line cannot be established between the modern and postmodern periods or between the discipline and control societies, a clear demarcation cannot be made between the globalized, network culture and the postmodern period from which it is emerging. I will therefore suggest a method of historicization that differs from that of Berlin, who has been critiqued for his reliance on a modern of notion of progress in his histories of the field, as he represents history as a progression of distinct paradigms.[7] Following Mark Taylor (2001), and Hardt and Negri (2004), I will argue for a representation of history that depicts the present and past as always

[7] See Joseph Harris and Louise Phelps for similar critiques of Berlin's histories.

intertwined—history understood as a growing web of connections between past and present discourses, concepts, and occurrences. I will argue that this historical network does perhaps have a direction: it moves towards greater interconnection and complexity. I will therefore examine post-process theory as indicative of this move towards a greater concern for the social, touching on the overlaps between post-process theory and complexity theory.

Next, though Berlin theoretically problematizes the modern notion of subjectivity, agency, and power, he could not explore how these phenomena have changed as we entered this digital, networked age. In the early nineties Berlin made clear that we cannot base composition studies on a modern model of community as consensus, or a model of agency that conceives of students as rational, autonomous rhetors; I will apply these conclusions to the current historical moment. On the other hand, I argue— contrary to the conclusions of many in composition who are influenced by or identify with social epistemic rhetoric— that we must move beyond a model of agency that assumes freedom can be found through the creation and manipulation of virtual identities. The dispersal of power—and democratic resistance— from the margins to throughout the network of the control society, noted by Hardt and Negri (2000), should now be taken into account in our field's rhetorical and pedagogical response to the Web.

In Chapters Three and Four, I will argue that we should base our theorization of rhetoric on an understanding of power, agency, and democracy that draws on Hardt and Negri's conception of networked, rhizomatic power and

its antidote, multitude. I illustrate this model of power and resistance with, in Chapter Three, a rhetorical analysis of online social networks such as Facebook and MySpace, and, in Chapter Four, an analysis of personal blogs. More specifically, in Chapter Three, I establish with an analysis of social networking sites the fact that, contrary to Berlin's assumptions, technology itself does not inherently promote democracy. I extend this argument in Chapter Four, examining the ways in which personal blogging contributes to, and reinforces, Debord's spectacle. Further, I argue in Chapter Four that digital discourse does not necessarily provide the means to achieve agency in the manner suggested by Berlin (1996)—through the exploration and movement between varying subject positions. Using an analysis of blogging practices and the institutional contexts that surround them as support, I argue that electronic discourse does not inherently offer freedom and agency through subject exploration, as claimed by many new media theorists.

However, in both Chapters Three and Four I will also offer possible pedagogical responses to these emerging forms of electronic discourse. I suggest activities and assignments that encourage students to critically engage with the rhetorics of social networking sites and personal weblogs; I also provide pedagogical suggestions for the use of electronic discourse in the composition classroom in ways that encourage the kinds of rhizomatic community necessary to democracy in the network society. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I will examine psychoanalytic critiques of cultural studies oriented composition and argue that these critiques take on particular urgency in relation to the affect-driven

rhetorics of networked culture. Further, I will offer a description of my own cultural studies pedagogy on globalization as a response.

Chapter Two:

Towards Complexity: Narratives of Rhetoric in the Network Society

In *A Teaching Subject: Composition since 1966*, Joseph Harris (1996) criticizes what he sees as a reliance on the modern narrative of progress in Berlin's historical accounts of the field. Berlin, according to Harris, establishes static paradigms of rhetorical thought and then suggests "that a new and more complex epistemic rhetoric has superseded" those historical theories (p. 41). Louise Phelps (1999) makes a similar argument, asserting that Berlin constructs his historical narratives to support a particular leftist ideology, casting his view of composition as the result of historical progress and ignoring contradictory voices on the grounds that they are holding onto an outdated and irrelevant conception of rhetoric and writing. Both Harris and Phelps point to the contradiction between the underlying narrative of progress that appears to propel much of Berlin's historical work and the postmodern assumptions that underlie his rhetorical and pedagogical theories. Berlin's conception of social epistemic rhetoric, for example, is developed in part as a reaction to an earlier progressive paradigm of literacy that was based on naïve Enlightenment notions of progress. The critique of rationalist progress (also seen in Lyotard's critique of meta-narratives) inherent in social epistemic rhetoric is perhaps undermined by Berlin's seeming adherence to a notion of epistemological progress in his histories of English studies.

Harris and Phelps are right to criticize Berlin for theoretical inconsistency, but this inconsistency points toward a fresh perspective on historical change and meta-narratives. I suggest an alternative model of historicization for rhetoric and

composition: one based not on the linear, rational narrative of Enlightenment progress, but on the carnivalesque narrative that may have a pattern or even direction but *isn't* totalizing. The model for this understanding of history is the network. In this understanding, history is not a linear movement through time or a progression of static paradigms. Instead, history is an emerging web of connections. After all, historical movements are never completely new, as they always connect back and incorporate the past. Networks change and grow—as per their nature as emergent systems. Thus, history can be seen as a carnivalesque narrative as described by Hardt and Negri (2004) via Bakhtin: if history is an open network, it can incorporate difference while remaining interconnected.

Ironically, Harris' description of Berlin's folly is also an apt description of the direction in which history—and rhetoric—*is* moving: towards complexity. Insights from the emerging discourse on network cultures point us toward this conclusion. Mark Taylor (2004) argues that the "critique of meta-narratives is wrong… there is a direction of history"— as things become more interconnected in the network society, they become more complex (p. 816). Taylor's argument suggests that perhaps Berlin is correct in establishing an historical direction for the field of rhetoric and composition in which older theories of literacy are, as Harris writes, superseded by theories that are more complex. That is, rhetoric is increasingly informed by and arises from the increasing interconnection of all society.

Change has occurred in the field, albeit in a non-linear fashion—in which each new development is connected by many threads to the past—towards an

increasingly complex understanding of rhetoric, an understanding that is marked by a growing emphasis on the composition classroom as a site of social action. In the following sections, I will trace this non-linear development, first briefly considering the influences of the progressive movement in composition on social epistemic rhetoric. I will then examine social epistemic rhetoric's development in response to the process movement—a development that nonetheless incorporates some of the central insights of the process movement to create a more complex and socially-oriented paradigm of rhetoric and literacy. Finally, I will consider the ways in which post-process theory confirms the field's trend towards complexity, touching on ways rhetorical theory is beginning to look like complexity theory.[8] The process movement questioned earlier paradigms of composition by focusing attention on the process of writing, rather than the finished product. Post-process questions whether a single, generalizable process of writing could, or even should, be determined. Thus, post-process theory moves towards an even greater concern for the social as it asserts that each act of writing is contingent and completely bound to the cultural context of the moment.

Narratives of Progress?

I will begin by considering Berlin's paradigms of literacy in relation to the development of the process movement and the subsequent shift to social epistemic rhetoric (which has been called the social turn in composition). The

[8] By complexity theory, I mean the study of self-organizing, and emergent, systems: dynamic networks that are made up of diversely behaving elements that nonetheless in some way cohere. As note above, Blakesley (2004) illustrates this with a description of a flock of birds, and, of course, the WWW is the most obvious example of an open, self-organizing system. The behavior of self-organizing systems, such as a flock of birds or a group of fireflies that light in unison (to use expert Steven Strogatz's (2003) example) emerges and changes spontaneously, and though the behavior of such a system is dependent upon the initial conditions from which it arises, the course of the development and behavior of the system is not predictable.

origins of the process movement can be traced back to the progressive movement in education during the early 20th century, which operated under what Berlin calls the democratic paradigm of literacy.[9] As noted in the previous chapter, democratic literacy arose in response to what Berlin calls the literacy of the meritocracy and the literacy of liberal culture.

Practitioners of democratic literacy responded to current-traditional rhetoric as well as the elitism of liberal culture literacy. Scholars such as Fredrick Newton Scott and Gertrude Buck rejected the formalistic focus on mechanics of current-traditional rhetoric, focusing instead on invention; such scholars also rejected the liberal culture literacy exemplified by elitist placement tests based on lists of canonical literary works (Berlin, 1987; Crowley, 1998). Further, their progressive view of education, influenced by Dewey, emphasized writing in response to experience and context, as well as writing as the social construction of knowledge (Berlin, 1987). This emphasis reflects an early turn in the field toward the social, as well as toward an anti-foundational conception of rhetoric in which language and communication is context-bound and constitutive of knowledge and reality, rather than representational of it.

The influence of the progressives was short-lived, however, as current-traditionalism dominated the field for much of the remainder of the twentieth century. It was in response to current-traditionalism's static formalism, extreme

[9] Though the process movement could in fact possibly be traced back to Isocrates, with his emphasis on invention in response to the usual practice of teaching rhetoric through the imitation of static models. Further, social-epistemic rhetoric could in fact also be traced back to Isocrates with his emphasis on contingent truths over Platonic or Aristotlean Truth, and his assertion that rhetoric should teach individuals to respond to the culture and historical moment in which they exist.

attention to "correct" mechanics, and most of all its exclusive focus on the product of writing, that the process movement arose. Two major strands of the process movement emerged. The first strand, exemplified by the work of Flower and Hayes, focuses on the cognitive processes of the writer; it examines the manner in which the individual writer works through the various tasks identified as parts of the writing process, such as invention, pre-writing, revising, etc. The second strand of the process movement, exemplified by the work of Elbow and Macorie, focused instead on the creative ability of the individual writer, emphasizing the employment of techniques such as free-writing that shifted attention away from the product of writing and onto the processes by which a text can be shaped, through a series of revisions, from the pure expression of the writer.

Of course, Berlin (1988) criticizes these two approaches to process, labeling those in the camp of Flower and Hayes cognitivists and those in Elbow's camp expressivists. Berlin rejects the foundational epistemologies of both strands. He was not alone in this critique; many composition theorists rejected an inner-directed, foundational approach to writing theory and pedagogy. (Berlin himself grouped these scholars loosely under the paradigm of social epistemic rhetoric.) For example, Patricia Bizzell (1982), in her important essay *Cognition, Convention and Certainty: What We Need to Know About Writing,* published early in the theoretical battle between the foundationalists and anti-foundationalists in composition, writes of the contrast between inner-directed theories of composition (exemplified by the cognitivists and expressivists) and

outer-directed theories (exemplified by advocates of social epistemic rhetoric) (p. 366). She argues persuasively that, in contrast to the work of the cognitivists, universal structures of writing cannot be found or taught. Further, her emphasis on the role played by the discourse community in the construction of knowledge points to the weakness of the cognitivists' suggestion that the writing process is generalizable across contexts as well as the expressivists' problematic focus on individual expression.

Berlin criticizes both strands of the process movement on grounds similar to Bizzell's, critiquing their foundational epistemologies and their focus on the individual over society and community. He further attacks these two strands of composition for their lack of attention to ideology. On the one hand, the cognitivists propose to examine with objective, scientific methods a writing process that is similarly objective—a process that can be teased out of individual writing and then applied to all across boundaries of gender and culture and class. Flower and Hayes (1981) detailed a groundbreaking study that used talk-aloud protocols to demonstrate that the writing process is not linear. That is, the study examined student writers as they wrote, by asking them to articulate (talk-aloud) their thinking process as they worked through a particular writing task. The evidence from this study suggested that writers do not follow a linear path through the steps of the writing process, progressing from pre-writing, to composing, to revising; instead, the authors argued, the transcripts from these talk-aloud sessions demonstrated that the writing process is recursive. Flower and Hayes argued that this study proved that writers move between stages in the

writing process in a circular fashion: composing, planning, writing more, revising, planning again, writing more, revising again, and so forth. This is a useful observation regarding how many individuals write. The problem comes when this observation is generalized to all writers; when Flower and Hayes assert that what they have observed should be understood as *the* writing process. As Bizzell makes clear, writing practices (and conventions) are determined not just by individual writers, but by the discourse community to which a given writer responds. In other words, for example, a scholar writes according to the conventions and expectations of the academic discourse community. These expectations vary among fields; further, the writer will (or at least should) revise his or her writing according to level of specialization of the intended audience. In another example, an individual employed in an office will compose according to the conventions of that particular discourse community; the conventions for "office communications" will vary according to many factors, including the type of business (say, engineering vs. marketing) and the power relations among the writer and various audience members. Writing practices and processes will vary widely depending upon social, cultural, and economic contexts as well as specific rhetorical situations.

Berlin further criticizes Flower and Hayes for failing to address the role of ideology, both in the execution and presentation of their study as well as in their conclusions regarding the writing process. Berlin notes that cognitivists are perhaps the most direct heirs of current-traditional rhetoric, which viewed writing as a rational act of information transfer and assumed that the purpose of writing is

foremost to advance capitalist interests. Flower and Hayes likewise see their research as scientific study, and present the writing process as an act of problem solving that mirrors the model of rational problem solving privileged in science and business (Berlin, 1988, p. 483). Flower and Hayes, Berlin argues, refuse the question of ideology altogether, by presenting their work as scientific and therefore neutral. Berlin dismisses the neutrality of their work, as he asserts that their model of the writing process inherently reinforces an instrumentalist understanding of knowledge and communication, which in turn suggests a writing pedagogy that takes as its primary purpose the preparation of students for participation in the capitalist market. The cognitivist approach to writing is not only ideological in its conception, but it also inherently privileges and reproduces particular (capitalist and individualist) ideologies.

On the other hand, the expressivists rely upon the Platonic conception of Truth as that which lies within each individual and that which the writing teacher encourages the student to express. On the surface, as Berlin (1987) notes, expressivists seem to encourage writing as means for the critique of power and authority and resistance to the status quo. However, expressivists privilege the individual above all else and suggest that political power can only be gained by individual acts of resistance to convention and the dominant culture. In other words, political change can only be understood and accomplished one individual at a time. Collective resistance can be dangerous, as it can threaten the "integrity of the individual," thereby distorting one's view of the personal Truth which can only be found within (Berlin, 1987, p. 487). Though one can gain access to this

Truth only through personal reflection and inquiry (which can be accomplished through writing), it is nonetheless universal: as Berlin puts it "[M]y best and deepest vision supports the same universal and external laws as everyone else's best and deepest vision" (1987, p. 488).

Berlin argues that while expressivism appears to advocate resistance and encourage ideological critique, it ends up simply reinforcing and reproducing the capitalistic and oppressive status quo. Because of its exclusive focus on the individual and its insistence that change can only be defined and accomplished via the individual, expressivist pedagogy can easily be co-opted by the dominant forces it supposedly opposes. The rhetoric of expressivism closely resembles and therefore reinforces the capitalist values of individualism, entrepreneurialism, and consumerism.

Further, the Platonic, idealist notion of truth suggested by expressivism can also serve to reproduce the current social order by establishing a single set of values (usually those of the elite) as absolute and universal. The epistemological assumption that there exists a single, essential Truth to which one does or does not gain access results in the marginalization of all those who cannot "find" that Truth, as well as those who simply do not agree with it. (Those who disagree with the idea that such a Truth exists at all are also, of course, marginalized.) The roots of expressivism then, can be traced to what Berlin calls the "literacy of liberal culture" (mentioned in the previous chapter), an approach to English studies that viewed the act of writing as an act of individual genius and saw the ability to write well as available only to those who had knowledge of the great values and

ideas of "mankind" (that is, the universal Truth). The values and ideas with which one must be acquainted were, of course, those held by the elite class. Thus, expressivism, although attempting to break from current-traditionalism and provide a means for resistance to the dominant culture and ideologies, ends up reinforcing those ideologies.

In response, Berlin (1988, 1994) proposes a more complex anti-foundational alternative, social- epistemic rhetoric that views language and rhetoric as inherently social as well as ideological. Berlin argues that rhetoric is always historically situated, located within specific cultural contexts that change over time. Further, for social epistemic rhetoric, language is *constitutive* of subjectivity, experience, and knowledge, rather than representational of it. Berlin (1988) argues from a poststructuralist viewpoint that knowledge is created through the dialectical interaction between the individual, the discourse community, and material conditions; however, he carefully notes that all three aspects of this dialectic are verbal constructs (pp. 730-731). This is because knowledge and experience cannot be understood (or even exist) outside of language. Rhetoric is thus always ideological, as it is discourse situated within particular historical circumstances that create the material and political conditions as well the subjects and communities that perceive those conditions. Hegemony is maintained by the normalization of dominant codes that privilege and perpetuate the interests and values of the elite. Discourse is then generated from naturalized, invisible ideologies. As Berlin (1988) writes, "We are lodged within a hermeneutic circle…. The material, the social and the subjective are at once both

the producers and products of ideology" (p. 732). Social epistemic rhetoric's goals are explicitly political. Berlin argues that students must learn to analyze and question the political and economic consequences of ideologies (e.g. students should learn to consider how particular versions of truth that are naturalized by dominant discourse lead to the perpetuation of the status quo and a sense of powerlessness in the individual).

It is easy to view Berlin's paradigm of literacy, social epistemic rhetoric, as indeed more complex and therefore more advanced than the two major strands of the process movement from which it proceeded. Both the cognitivists and expressivists rely on a foundational conception of rhetoric and reality that privileges the individual over the social and assumes the existence of truth that lies, respectively, in the objectivity of science or in the truth that can be found within the individual. Most problematically, both approaches fail to address issues of difference. The cognitivist approach takes as a given the "neutral writing subject" and assumes that the writing process of an individual or small group of individuals can be generalized across the entire population of writers, regardless of race, gender, class, or other factors. On the other hand, expressivists confirm and advocate a romantic notion of writing that perpetuates an elitist conception of truth, culture and ability.

Models of History, Knowledge, and Power

Harris, however, takes issue with the narrative of progress that underlies Berlin's history of the field, arguing that Berlin's paradigms operate on the assumption that previous movements no longer influence or overlap the newest

theory. This critique appears problematic, as it is clear from Berlin's own work that social epistemic rhetoric *does* connect to paradigms of literacy that came before—it is clearly connected to and influenced by the progressivists and still holds onto insights gained by those who led the process movement while rejecting the current traditional focus on the written product, for example. But what of the deeper level of the critique—the implication that Berlin has constructed the history of composition as a "metanarrative"? Or the idea that Berlin clings to a now-defunct model of history reliant on Enlightenment notions of progress? In order to fully explore this question, we must first consider the postmodern critique of the metanarrative and the key role (despite this critique) that metanarratives still play in the production of hegemonic power in the network society. We can then consider the role of metanarrative in Berlin's histories of the field and suggest a model of historical narrative that maintains coherence and direction but is at the same time non-totalizing.

In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) famously writes, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as the incredulity toward metanarrative" (p. xxiv). Lyotard argues that the modern is marked by the rise of science, which rejected the legitimation of knowledge in traditional cultures through reference to cultural narratives. Science discounts those narratives as myth or fiction and legitimates its own knowledge through reference to the scientific method—that is, knowledge is legitimated through the observation of repeatable experiments. This leads to the question of epistemology: how is the process by which knowledge is arrived upon legitimated? In traditional

cultures, this process did not need to be defended or examined; the authoritative narrator was the legitimate source of the metanarrative. On the other hand, the epistemological foundation of science could only be legitimated through recourse to metanarratives, such as the Enlightenment metanarrative of progress towards the consensus understanding of the good society. Of course, this reliance on metanarrative for epistemological legitimation is problematic and self-contradictory; science by definition rejects the idea that truth can be proved through narrative. Science therefore turns away from the metanarrative in favor of performativity, legitimating its practices with a rubric of efficiency. Scientific knowledge and narrative knowledge are no longer legitimated by common narratives; they are separate language games, each with their own rules. Thus arises the postmodern condition: "The social subject seems to dissolve in this dissemination of language games. The social bond is linguistic, but it is not woven with a single thread" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 40). The metanarrative disappears, and little narratives—numerous, varying language games—abound.

Overall, Lyotard views this as a positive development that allows for the existence of varying, diverse viewpoints not subject to the homogenizing "terror" of the metanarrative (p. 66). Further, the increasing mediation of society by technology, what Lyotard calls "computerization," could allow local groups the ability to make decisions based on widely available information that in the past they would have lacked. In order for this to occur, Lyotard notes, the public need simply be given free access to the computerized information (p. 67). On the other hand, he also notes the fact that science is legitimated by the performativity

principle—a principle unconcerned with what is true or just—can lead to undesirable consequences (p. xxv, p. 67). Lyotard writes, "The computerization of society could become the 'dream' instrument for controlling and regulating the market system, extended to include knowledge itself and governed exclusively by the performativity principle. In that case it would inevitably involve the use of terror" (p. 67). Lyotard predicts that, in the hyper-mediated society, technology could be used to create and perpetuate a mode of production in which knowledge is determined and defined by the market system, a system organized by the quest for greater efficiency without regard to ethics. Society would thus be subject to the terror of totalization according to the normalized logic of the market. Unfortunately, this is exactly what has happened.

We indeed find ourselves in a global society that is structured and articulated by the multinational corporation according to the free market. Hardt and Negri (2000) write, "The complex apparatus that selects investments and directs financial and monetary maneuvers determines the new geography of the world market, or really the new biopolitical structuring of the world" (p. 32). Instead of simply encouraging and taking advantage of unequal trade conditions, corporations now produce and organize society not only on the global level, but also at the level of individual subjectivity. As noted in Chapter One, in such a society, power is biopolitical, that is, power is expressed as a control over individual consciousness as well as all social relations that each individual embraces of his or her own accord (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Foucault, 1978). As Hardt and Negri suggest, "The great industrial and financial powers thus produce

not only commodities but also subjectivities. They produce agentic subjectivities within the biopolitical context: they produce needs, social relations, bodies, and minds—which is to say, they produce producers" (p. 32).

Hardt and Negri note that technology—and its use by the communications industry—makes possible the production of biopower and the creation of a "society of control." As I noted in the previous chapter, the control society, as discussed by Deleuze (1990) as well as Hardt and Negri, is a historical and societal condition that contrasts the disciplinary society (although it still maintains its practices in certain contexts). In the disciplinary society— examined by Foucault in a number of works including *Discipline and Punish (*1977) and *Birth of a Clinic* (1973)—power is produced through the institutional construction of social norms and is ordered hierarchically. The control society is made possible by technologies that organize consciousness and allow for self-enrollment in biopolitical order (Deleuze, 1990). Control is no longer only applied by societal institutions (as in the disciplinary society) but extends by way of digital networks into every facet of life.

And so the computerization of society has led to that which Lyotard feared: the governing of the market and the production of knowledge according to the performativity principle. Knowledge—and therefore subjectivity and social relations—are all defined and valued according to their benefit to the market, and the (free) market is organized to operate with maximum efficiency. Lyotard warned that terror would be inevitable in such a case—the terror of the totalization and homogenization of diverse societies made to conform to the

hegemonic order. During modernity, this terror was imposed through metanarratives, and in our computerized postmodern society this continues to be the case.

In the computerized society, metanarratives are produced to legitimize the current relations of production and perpetuate current power structures. As noted earlier, Hardt and Negri make clear that the communications industry plays an essential role not only in the structuring of global production but also in the legitimization of it. The discourse of the communications industry, as it creates subjectivities and orders social relations, makes the justification of the current mode of production immanent (p. 33). Hardt and Negri (2000) write:

> Contrary to the way many postmodernist accounts would have it…the imperial machine, far from eliminating master narratives, actually produces and reproduces them (ideological master narratives in particular) in order to validate and celebrate its own power (p. 34).

The "imperial machine" is the mode of production that is made possible and structured by the communications industry, which also distributes the metanarratives by which it is legitimized. That is, metanarratives did not disappear because of the emergence of the mode of production that defines postmodernity. Instead, they are produced and distributed throughout media networks in order to legitimate the mode of production. But these metanarratives are perhaps different than those used to legitimate traditional and scientific knowledge during modernity. They are produced by that which they legitimize. As Hardt and Negri assert, the imperial machine "is a subject that produces its own authority. This is a form of legitimation that rests on nothing outside itself and is reproposed ceaselessly by developing its own languages of self-validation"

(2000, p. 33). The modern metanarrative imposed its order from without—as power in a disciplinary society is imposed by institutions and does not reach entirely inside the consciousness of the individual—legitimatizing traditional knowledge or science. Metanarratives are now produced within by the imperial machine itself in order to self-legitimize. (The most obvious example of such a metanarrative is the great cultural battle between Islamo-fascism and American freedom, fabricated by the U.S. administration and reinforced by the news media.) In the network society, the field of composition and rhetoric must take as a key purpose the rhetorical analysis of these metanarratives, paying attention to the construction of metanarratives in various mediated contexts.

But what about the historical and ideological metanarrative of composition and rhetoric? The field must be attentive to its own master narratives. Harris and Phelps essentially argue that Berlin constructs the history of composition as an inexorable progression towards Berlin's own leftist ideal. In other words, Berlin presents social epistemic rhetoric as a new historical paradigm for the field so as to more soundly reject, from an ideological point of view, scholarship and pedagogy that is focused on the individual and therefore in line with capitalism. From the perspective of Harris and Phelps, the various strands of the process movement and social epistemic rhetoric are simultaneously existing practices and theories, each with their own ideology, and Berlin is simply arguing for his own ideology by presenting the movement towards it as historical progress. This critique is indeed helpful as it underlines the danger that Berlin's approach to history entails—that the history of the field will be understood as a linear

progression from one paradigm to the next. Further, it alerts us to the danger that Berlin's history, in spite of his leftist political commitment to the celebration of difference, could, like the Marxist metanarrative critiqued by Lyotard, totalize and essentialize. Berlin, in his effort to present a coherent representation of the field's history that conforms to his own notion of ideological progress, manufactures distinct and internally homogenous paradigms of rhetorical thought that arise in succession, displacing the paradigm which came before. In order to construct social epistemic rhetoric as an historical movement in composition, for example, Berlin must include in that movement scholars with widely divergent theories and values, thereby erasing differences between varying although loosely like-minded compositionists.

There is another model of historical narrative that responds to the critique of Harris and Phelps and offers an alternative to the potentially totalizing narrative offered by Berlin. Taylor (2001) bases his rejection of the postmodern critique of the metanarrative on the failure of poststructuralist theory to conceive "of a nontotalizing structure that nonetheless acts as a whole" (p. 11). Complexity theory provides this structure by allowing historical narratives to be understood as emergent systems, or, as Hardt and Negri (2004) put it (referencing Bakhtin) a carnivalesque narrative—in a way that resolve's Lyotard's famous critique. A historical narrative from this perspective connects various peoples and cultures, incorporating them into the whole without eliminating individual differences or distinctions; the story grows *because* of this connection and interaction, and thus, it moves toward greater and greater complexity rather than becoming more and

more homogenous. The historical narrative in this case is a dynamic, growing network that is created from the interactions of diverse and distinct events, individuals and concepts instead of a linear progression towards an ideal. From this perspective, the historical narrative of composition can be understood as a story that maintains coherence and direction while still allowing for the preservation of distinct voices and diverse opinions. As society becomes more complex and interconnected, so does composition.

Harris and Phelps are right to argue that categories slip and that practices and theories are interwoven between and across historical moments in field. However, how is the field to address the fact that the interweaving of ideas and ideologies over time leads to an ever-more complex interconnection of cultures, peoples, and humankind in general? There is perhaps good reason that Berlin's theories move toward greater complexity—the field, just like the rapidly globalizing world in which it exists, is becoming increasingly more interconnected. As Taylor (2004) argues, greater connection leads toward greater complexity. The narratives of the field seem to have reflected this increasing interconnection during the social turn in composition, initiated and documented by Berlin and his contemporaries (e.g. Bizzell, Faigley, and Barthalomae) and reflected in the more recent emergence of post-process theory, which continues and intensifies the concern for the social and more explicitly parallels developments in complexity and network theory. But this social turn need not be totalizing or framed as progress towards an ideal. Diverse and contradictory voices need not be viewed as an impediment to "progress" but as necessary

contributors to the ongoing dynamic growth of the field. Further, this growth need not be understood as linear progress but instead could be viewed as the result of increasing interconnection; if history is an open network, it is necessarily self-emergent (that is, it grows on its own). The field's turn toward the social, however, has in many cases carried with it a political commitment that may be the real target of Harris and Phelps' critique. But as Taylor points out, greater interconnection *should* suggest a sense of greater social responsibility.

Post Process and Complexity

Taylor (2001) suggests that critical theory must move beyond concepts of postmodernism towards network theory, and rhetoric and composition must similarly move beyond a theoretical framework grounded in post-structuralism and begin to incorporate network and complexity theory into its understanding and study of writing. This is not to say that postmodernist theory should be rejected by compositionists (or anyone else). Instead, the field must augment its use of post-structuralism with an engagement with network and complexity theory. There have been brief attempts at such an engagement as I will note below, and *JAC*'s issue (2004) on the work of Taylor is a very useful recent step towards the incorporation of network theory into the discourse of the field. I believe that we must now consider the strong parallels between the work of theorists such as Taylor and the characteristics of the emerging post-process movement. In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine the historical and theoretical relationship between social epistemic rhetoric and post-process theory, considering the dynamic network of relations between the two overlapping

models of rhetorical thought. Further, I will consider the parallels between complexity and post-process theory, detailing the ways in which our understanding of writing can perhaps best be represented by the model of the complex network.

However, I must first note that complexity theory is not entirely new to rhetoric and composition. There were early, notable engagements with complexity theory in the discourse of the field. In the *Electronic Word* (1993), Richard Lanham briefly suggested that, as digital discourse becomes more and more central to the study of rhetoric, complexity theory will become increasingly useful as a means of analyzing communication. Further, he draws parallels between Sophistic, anti-foundational rhetoric and complexity in contrast to foundational, static rhetoric. He argues that the Sophists correctly saw rhetoric as a dynamic, open system, while philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle perceived rhetoric to be a closed, unchanging system. Lanham claims that, as rhetoric becomes increasingly digital, this Sophistic, open view of communication will be most useful.[10] Thus far, post-process theorists, unlike proponents of social epistemic rhetoric such as Lanham and Porter, have not engaged directly with complexity theory. It is essential that the discourse of post-process engage explicitly with complexity, as the parallels between the two areas of thought are too great to not be met head-on. Post-process theory is attempting to address the need for even greater attention to the social in composition and the need for attention to the

[10] James Porter (1992) also engages briefly with complexity theory in *Audience and Rhetoric.* Porter argues that complexity and network theory, via Foucault, can help describe the structure and development of discourse communities.

varying contexts that surround each act of writing. Further, I would argue, it is beginning, at least tacitly, to analyze writing as a complex emergent system.

Post-process theory, although it cannot be said to encompass a single set of beliefs or concepts, is generally concerned with critique of various assumptions of the process movement. One of its central critiques concerns the attempt to determine a generalizable process of writing that, once it is formulated on the basis of empirical research, can be applied to all writers in all circumstances (Kent, 1999, pp. 2-3). Aside from noting the problems of such an approach from the standpoints of race, class and gender (problems already noted, by some extent, by those who advocated social epistemic rhetoric), post-process theorists also argue that an act of writing is entirely dependent upon the context that surrounds it in the moment in which it occurs. As such, no two acts of writing are ever alike, and therefore a single writing process extrapolated from research (such as the one suggested by Flower and Hayes) will not apply for any two cases, much less to all acts of writing. In this way, post-process theory emphasizes the need for rhetorical theory and pedagogy that addresses difference and attends to the ways that writing is always a contextual act influenced by the political and economic circumstances that surround it.

Such an approach to writing, of course, is not radically different from the approach advocated by those in favor of social epistemic rhetoric. Berlin et al. argued vehemently against the cognitivist and expressivist approaches to writing for much the same reasons: both models failed to take into the account historical, cultural, and social contexts surrounding each act of writing. Both social

epistemic rhetoric and post-process theory reject the idea that the writing process can be generalized across varying and dynamic writers and rhetorical situations. So, in fact, there have actually been two post-process movements or perhaps two phases in the post-process movement: the first phase was the initial turn away from cognitivism and expressivism, and the second phase is the complete turn away from the use of the concept of "process" to describe the writing act. It may be most accurate to say that what has been called the post-process movement is really an intensification of the social turn in composition.

Most generally, post-process theorists reject the use of the word "process" in the description of the writing act because the term denotes a set of actions that are repeatable and generalizable. The leading proponent of the movement, Kent (1999), argues that every writing act is utterly contingent and singular—the act of writing can never be replicated because the conditions surrounding the act are always variant and dynamic. Kent suggests three assumptions upon which most in the post-process movement generally agree: 1) writing is public, 2) writing is interpretive, and 3) writing is situational. He argues that writing is done in order to communicate with others; therefore, it is always a public act that occurs in dynamic historical moments and in shifting relations to a range of other individuals (p. 2). This web of dynamic relations cannot be replicated, and so the writing act cannot be generalized into a repeatable process. Further, he argues that writing is not simply an attempt to communicate but also a means for understanding the world— an act of interpretation. Kent writes, "Interpretation constitutes the uncodifiable moves we make when we attempt to align our

utterances with the utterances of others, and these moves—I have called them 'hermeneutic guesswork'—do not constitute a process…except perhaps in retrospect" (p. 3). When writing one is always attempting to understand other utterances, making guesses about his/ her audience and what strategies might be most useful to the task of communicating to that audience—none of these questions can be determined conclusively. Thus, writing is always an open-ended act of interpretation that cannot be turned into a process. Finally, Kent asserts that writing is always situated—that is, writers always work from a particular position or rhetorical situation. As Kent acknowledges, this is a claim often made by those in the process movement. However, he argues that post-process theorists take this assumption further, arguing that writing is only possible because individuals hold a set of beliefs "about what other language users know and about how our beliefs cohere with theirs" (p. 3). In other words, we must have previous beliefs that will help us begin the hermeneutic guesswork of writing. Following Donald Davidson, Kent calls these beliefs "prior theories" and suggests that writing requires the development of a "passing theory"—one's actual guess as to the meaning of the other utterances to which one is responding and how to best communicate in that given situation (4). To summarize, each act of communication differs according to the ever-dynamic variables that surround it. Further, writing is a open, ongoing act of interpretation; a true, definitive understanding of that to which one responds is impossible—all one can do is create a "passing theory."

Kent's description of writing corresponds in interesting and useful ways to the characteristics and behaviors of open, emergent networks. An understanding

of those correspondences can help us to better understand the relationship between the post-process movement and the theories of complexity that are so helpful for analyzing network culture. Further, I would like to suggest that these correspondences point to a need to understand the most current paradigm of writing theory as having a basis in anti-foundationalism and postmodern theory as well as network theory.

The consequences of Kent's first observation (that writing is public) can be productively represented with the model of the network. Each writing act occurs within a web of dynamic relations—to other people, as well as to historical, economic and cultural contexts. In other words, the writing act occurs within a shifting open network. This act is not repeatable or generalizable because the network of relations that surrounds it is always changing. As Taylor (2001) points out, as soon as a single new piece of information is added to the network, the structure of the entire network is changed, and the way one responds to this new situation must also change. The web of relations to which writing always responds never stays constant, and a single writing process cannot be generalized beyond a single historical moment.

Kent's assertion that writing is always interpretive can also be helpfully elucidated through the model of the open network. Kent argues that writing should never be understood as an attempt to express or find a correspondence in language to a single or absolute truth. Writing it is always interpretive of experience and observation—never definitive. Thus, writing can be usefully represented, as Lanham (1993) suggests, as an open system. In other words,

instead of a foundational model of communication in which the relationship between meaning and discourse is static, post-process theory suggests a model of writing understood as an open, ever-changing network of relations between signification and ideas, opinions, knowledge, and subjectivities.

Finally, Kent argues that the fact that writing always responds to a specific rhetorical situation means that the writing act is not repeatable. This observation finds its parallel in the relation between the initial conditions from which a network emerges and the subsequent development of that network. For Kent, the act of writing is a spontaneous reaction to a specific rhetorical situation; that is, what occurs in the writing act (and what results, in the form of a written trace) is contingent upon the initial specific motivation for writing. The writer cannot control or repeat the act, as each new situation will result in a different act and a different end product. Likewise, the development of a complex emergent network is also a spontaneous, unpredictable reaction to the initial conditions from which the network arises. Terranova (2004) uses biological computing to explain how such a network develops and to illustrate the limited amount of control that can be exerted over that development. She notes that computational experiments called "cellular automata"[11] demonstrate that only "soft control" can be exerted over the behavior of emergent systems—that is, the systems can only be minimally controlled or determined by the carefully engineered initial conditions of the experiment. She contrasts this "soft control" of emergent computer models to the rigid control of step-by-step computer programming. In any case, the

[11] Cellular automata are computer models that attempt to "formalize the characteristics of life." By following a set of mechanical and global rules these models are able to mimic a central feature of life: self-reproduction (Terranova, 2004, pp. 109-110).

development of a specific emergent system (or network) is completely dependent upon the specific situation from which it arises, and it is impossible to predict what will result—exactly how a given network will behave. A similar model of the writing act can perhaps better understand the contingency and unpredictability of written communication and move beyond problematic or even harmful representations of what goes on when we write.

The representation of the writing act and the product that results as similar to the development of an emergent network can help us to better understand the weaknesses of the process models of both the cognitivists and expressivists. Insofar as the cognitivist model is concerned, it becomes clear that Flower and Hayes are fundamentally incorrect to frame the success of student writers as a question of "control" over a problem that can be solved rationally. Not only is this kind of understanding of writing ideologically fraught, as Berlin argues, it totally misrepresents writing as an act which can be removed from a specific historical moment and generalized across time, place, and circumstance. The model of the emergent network can help illustrate how questions of time, place, and circumstance determine how an individual (or group) organizes a system of signs and the traces that are eventually left behind, committed to paper or screen. This system is always, like a network, open to revision. The dependence on the writing act (as well as what results from that act) on a specific situation, and the network of relations that surround that situation also suggests that perhaps Elbow (1973) should rethink having no problems with "making universal generalizations upon a sample of one" (p. 16). Further, if we understand the writing act as spontaneous

and unrepeatable, Elbow's (1973) goal of giving students "control over words" is problematic indeed (p. vii).

Emergent Trends

In the concluding section of this chapter, I touch on questions that have arisen in response to post-process theory and the usefulness that complexity theory might have in helping us resolve those questions. In doing so, I hope to suggest areas for further inquiry—issues in post-process theory that should be brought into greater dialogue with developments in the field's engagement with network culture. Both of the issues I would like to address briefly relate to questions of pedagogy. Questions about genre in composition pedagogy as well as the viability of pedagogy itself within a post-process model of composition can be usefully informed by a consideration of networks and complexity.

Genre theory has become a major element of the post-process movement. While literary theorists as early as Bakhtin have long since developed a flexible and dynamic understanding of genre, the field of composition has only relatively recently embraced this kind of conception of genre in a widespread manner. A consideration of the description of the relationship between discourse communities and genres by post-process theorist David Russell (1999) makes clear the overlap between current theories of composition and the discourse of complexity and networks:

> I have used the term *activity system* to mean collectives…of people who share…common purposes (objects and motives) and certain tools used in certain ways—among these tools in use certain kinds of writing done in certain ways or processes. These kinds of writing used in certain ways for certain recurring purposes I have called *genres*… Within an organization (activity systems) and among organizations (activity systems) there are a

> range of genres that form a complex system of genres, mediating the interactions of people and facilitating their collaborative and competitive work (pp. 81-82).

In this model of society and discourse, groups of people (discourse communities or activity systems) and the forms of writing that mediate relations within and among these groups are understood as complex systems. That is, the network of relations that composes a group of people is never static, although the group does share a common purpose that maintains its coherence. A genre itself is a complex system that can be connected to other genres to form a complex system of genres that mediates interactions between individuals and groups. A genre is often thought of as a "static category of texts that share certain formal features" (p. 81). Instead, a genre responds to a specific purpose, situation or use. Therefore, the unique initial conditions that motivated the use of a particular genre will have a large influence over how a given piece of discourse will turn out. Genre can be thought of a system of conventions that cohere around a specific kind of purpose or rhetorical situation. No rhetorical situation is ever exactly the same as another; therefore, each piece of discourse, although it may correspond to a particular genre, will develop in a different and unique manner. As Russell writes, "Genres and the social (writing) processes they enact are dynamic, always capable of changing" (p. 82). In other words, genres do cohere around certain characteristics and purposes, but they are always flexible and dynamic.

This is a useful and exciting way for composition studies to approach genre, as it moves beyond thinking of genre as a certain unchanging form or type of writing. However, such a sophisticated conception of genre does not always translate easily from theory to practice. A static understanding of genre has a

tendency to resurface when such theory is brought into the writing classroom. Students are eager for formula to follow and teachers (especially inexperienced teachers) are often happy to oblige. One need only glance through a few of the writing textbooks that have been apparently informed by the field's embrace of genre theory to confirm that simplification is difficult to resist. Treatment of genre often becomes limited to a list of conventions particular to the given genre. (These are presented in easy to read, quick-reference formats, of course.) The danger here is that, in the rush to embrace an exciting new theoretical understanding of genre and bring that understanding into the classroom, we end up simply replicating the pedagogy of current-traditionalism with its focus on modes and forms. Instead of requiring students to write a "compare and contrast essay" or an "expository essay," we now require that students write a "literacy narrative" or "discourse analysis." Each genre should be composed according to the characteristics of the form, or now, according to the assessment criteria established by the teacher (or institution).

How are we to avoid this? I believe that a more explicit embrace of the discourse of complexity and network theory can perhaps help us more clearly illustrate our current understanding of the dynamic nature of genre to the benefit of theorists, teachers, and even students. I would like to suggest that the field engage in further research into the overlap between genre theory and complexity theory. The model of the complex system or network may perhaps provide a way to conceptually, even visually, represent how genres behave. A genre is a system or network that is coherent yet dynamic, organized around a particular purpose

and conditioned by the situation from which it arose yet fluid and open. Genres, like networks that are articulated to other networks, connect to other genres to create even more complex systems. Keeping the model of the open network in mind while discussing genre and attempting to teach our students to recognize and employ various genres may help us avoid the trap of representing genre as type or form.

Network Epistemic Rhetoric?

In this chapter, I have suggested ways that theories of complexity and network behavior can offer a basis for new models of rhetorical history and theory. An understanding of how networks work helps us revise a linear, progress-oriented history of composition and historicize the field's current "post-process" moment in relation to our digital, networked culture as well as to theories of social epistemic rhetoric refigured in order to adequately respond to that culture. I believe that the field should begin to consider ways that social epistemic rhetoric, a theory of composition and rhetoric based largely on postmodern epistemological assumptions, can be supplemented—not replaced—by models of composition and rhetoric informed by the emerging discourses of complexity and network theory. The model of the network can perhaps help us to re-envision more vividly how history is represented (as carnivalesque narrative rather than metanarrative), how power circulates (rhizomatically rather than hierarchically), and how the writing act occurs (as a spontaneous, unpredictable response to a complex web of dynamic relations rather than an act of rational problem solving).

Chapter Three:

It isn't *Our*Space: Exposing the Logic of Online Social Networks

While some online discourse communities, such as those in the computer-mediated classroom or on academic listservs, have been widely critiqued from a rhetorical perspective, [12] online social networks have not. The need for this critique is particularly urgent, as so many college students participate in such social networks, frequenting such sites as MySpace, Friendster, and most prevalently, Facebook. Such sites provide users a homepage on which they can post profiles and pictures as well as blog entries; a network of pages is created by users who have agreed online to be "friends." These networks, particularly Facebook and MySpace, are rapidly becoming a major part of college students' everyday lives, as well as an increasingly important part of the network culture. Facebook registers more than 5,800 new users a day[13]; MySpace, which places no restrictions on membership, now has approximately 27 million members—a 400% growth in 2005 (Williams, 2005). The online social network is one of the most important manifestations of the emerging network culture for study within the field of rhetoric and composition.

While a great deal of attention has recently been paid to these networks by the popular press, they have received little scholarly attention. Such consideration is particularly needed in the field of rhetoric and composition, as we must pay attention to the electronic spaces in which college students communicate and are discursively shaped. While most of the attention to online social networks in the

[12] See, for example, Gurak's (1997) *Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace,* or Hawisher and Sullivan (1998), "Women on Networks."
[13] See McDonald (2005), "Finding Friends with Facebook."

news media has focused on the potential dangers of the sites as spaces for sexual predators or drug sales, a rhetorical critique of such sites reveals more subtle dangers: such networks perpetuate dominant values and enroll members primarily as targets of marketing and surveillance. Further, an analysis of online social networks yields insights that apply beyond these particular online spaces themselves; such networks are sites where the field can engage with and better theorize network cultures. As this essay will demonstrate, an analysis of these networks can help the field re-conceptualize agency and "community" in the information society. Neither the discipline at large nor Berlin (chiefly because of his early death) has adequately analyzed the fundamental role played by capital in networked, rhizomatic forms of organization, communication, and culture. I will examine online social networks as an example of the ways that electronic networks are conditioned by the milieu of late capitalism from which they emerge, making them sites subject to control and surveillance that thereby manufacture and perpetuate hegemony. Moreover, this analysis both offers insights into the commodified nature of community in the network culture and points to the need— in order to enable resistance to this commodification—to move towards an understanding of community as multitude. Further, I will argue that the concept of multitude can help us move beyond models of community that are either based on consensus or challenged by "dissensus" to the more balanced understanding of community suggested by social epistemic rhetoric. In addition, online social networks are examined as examples of sites in our society in which, contrary to Foucault, spectacle and surveillance coexist— in a mutually

reinforcing relationship. However, because online social networks are (like all networks) open systems, they always offer the possibility of divergence and change; we must therefore explore the ways in which such networks are open to (or even enable) resistance.

I will first critically analyze the rhetorical features of these digital social networks, noting how the discourse of these networks helps construct the knowledge and subjectivity of participants in ways that perpetuate the dominant ideology of late capitalism as well as gendered and raced values.[14] My analysis will then lead to a reconsideration of the concept of community and an examination of the "invitational" rhetoric of social networking sites, as I will argue that such networks exemplify a re-articulation of "community" as a target of capitalistic surveillance and marketing as well as a forum for individualist self-expression and competition rather than a network or space that exists for mutual support. On the other hand, I suggest that social networking sites point to possibility of future online communities in which Berlin's as well as Hardt and Negri's vision of democracy can be supported and encouraged. Finally, I will suggest ways that current online social networks can be reshaped to offer spaces for communal engagement and action and will briefly suggest possible pedagogical responses that can enable students to become aware of the ways in which they are shaped by and can shape these social networks.

[14] It is very important to note that both Facebook and MySpace are gendered and raced spaces: their discourse privileges and perpetuates not only the ideology of capitalism, but also the dominant values of the patriarchal and white culture as well. Although this paper will point to some examples of the privileging of gendered and raced values, a more fully developed critique of these networks in relation to the issues of both gender and race is very much needed.

Social Networking Rhetoric

As discussed above, the paradigm of social epistemic rhetoric offers a useful theoretical framework for the rhetorical analysis of the discursive practices of the digital age. However, as I've also discussed, social epistemic rhetoric is limited by Berlin's failure to perceive the central role of capital in the emergence of network technology. Instead, as noted in Chapter One, Berlin (1996) perpetuated what Braun (2001) calls "democracy hope," arguing that technology itself inherently encourages democratic political and economic practices (p. 131). Again, as Terranova (2004) makes clear, network technology is not inherently democratic but is subsumed by late capitalism. Braun notes that the foundational role of capital in technological development and the emergence of electronic networks rules out the possibility that technology, by its nature, is democratic and conducive to egalitarian practices. However, Berlin's work is still actually quite helpful for exposing the role played by capital in the development of online networks as well as the ways in which these networks normalize the inequitable conditions of late capitalism.

Berlin's work does lay a theoretical framework within which we can critique and expose the ways in which the discourse of online social networks naturalize and perpetuate hegemonic values. As noted earlier, under the paradigm of social-epistemic rhetoric text production is not simply a means for transmitting information; it is a means for constructing knowledge. The paradigm also offers alternatives to dominant conceptions of signification and subjectivity; it recognizes the rhetoricity of discourse as well as the subject. As Berlin (1996)

asserts, one of the primary practices of social-epistemic rhetoric must be the study of codes—the signifying practices that constitute society. Just as knowledge is constructed and normalized by rhetorical acts, so are our culture and our way of life. Those codes (which include oral and literate practices as well as a wide range of social behaviors such as dress, body language, and the arrangement of personal space) that serve to reproduce the existing social and material relations under the current mode of production are privileged and naturalized under the condition of hegemony. Berlin advocates a kind of rhetorical analysis that focuses on the critique of these codes—recognizing them and examining how they function to privilege and perpetuate particular economic, ethnic, and gendered values as well as construct certain kinds of subjectivity. Further, we must also critically examine the ways in which codes construct subjectivity. As Berlin writes, we are "formed by the various discourses and sign systems that surround us… The result is that each of us is heterogeneously made up of competing discourses" (p. 66). Language is not simply a means for the transmission of knowledge; rather, the multitude of discourses we encounter composes *us*: the subject is formed by those discourses and practices with which he or she identifies.

Technology is becoming increasingly transparent,[15] and online spaces such as Facebook and MySpace may seem neutral to many users (particularly our students). However, because these complex, self-organizing networks have emerged within the milieu of late capitalism, they are structured by its ideology. The discourse of online social networks manufactures hegemony, perpetuating a

[15] As noted in Chapter One, Cynthia Selfe argues (1999), that technology often remains in the background, seen simply as a tool, rather than a subject of study and critique. Thus, technology is made invisible (or, at least neutral) by our lack of attention.

late capitalist economy that is dependent on the exploitation of the world's lower classes (and the continued obfuscation of that exploitation). Its discourse normalizes capitalist values and encourages the construction of identities that align with capitalistic ideologies as well as the patriarchal and raced values of the elite class.[16] It is therefore essential to examine the rhetorical practices of both the sponsors[17] and members of these networks to understand how those practices shape the values and subjectivities of all those involved; it is also necessary to consider how these practices shape the networks themselves. Both Facebook and MySpace construct and perpetuate the values and subjectivities of members through a variety of discursive means. The subjectivities of members are shaped through the construction of the member profile and the identification (and interaction) with groups. Further, dominant values are perpetuated through the representation of relationships within the networks as well as communication between members. As we will see, the result is an electronically linked network of people that challenges our notion of community: replacing the local group organized for mutual interest and civic action with a rhizomatic, decentralized collection of people focused on individualistic self-expression and micro-targeted by corporate capitalism.

[16] If Facebook is indeed a book of faces, it is important to note the face that originally graced the banner of its homepage: a graphic representation of a face that is clearly white and male. Thus, Facebook, via its visual logo, established the standard for faces within its network.

[17] While the term "sponsor" is here used in a conventional sense, it also is intended to invoke Deborah Brandt's use of the term in *Literacy in American Lives.* Brandt refers, in the book, to the "sponsors" of literacy: the corporate, governmental and private entities that sponsor literacy education for their own benefit. The sponsors of online social networks support forums for particular discursive practices that ultimately benefit the sponsors.

Emerging Social Networks

Online communities of various types have existed since the emergence of Internet, taking the form of listservs, discussion boards, and chat rooms; "cybercommunities" have been focused around various purposes such as online dating, business interests and activism. The recent emergence of online social networks is a new and very important step in the evolution of online communities: these are different in form from the kinds of virtual communities that have come before, and they have had a much bigger impact on the general culture. These networks are a very new phenomenon: it wasn't until 2003 that sites such as Friendster and MySpace became widely popular. Such networks begin and grow when founders invite their personal network of friends to join the site, who in turn invite their friends, and so on. Online social networks differ from other online communities not only by the way in which they are formed but also by the range of communication media they offer. These networks are made up of linked homepages from which members can blog, send personal emails, comment publicly on other homepages, instant message, and share files. They also differ from other topic or service driven online communities in that they are not held together by a central theme or consumer need.

There can be little doubt that Facebook and MySpace have become an increasingly important part of the network culture. Facebook now has almost 4 million members at 1,500 participating colleges of a network—numbers that are particularly impressive when one considers that the network began in February 2004 (Twohey, 2005, par. 4). Of the 85% of students at participating colleges who

use Facebook, 60% log in daily and over 90% log in once a week (Arrington, 2005, par. 9). While the numbers are impressive, they do not adequately express the great impact that the social network has had on college life in its short history. As one college student says, "It becomes part of your daily routine. It's email, the news, the weather, Facebook" (McDonald, 2005, par. 4). Students report spending hours a day on the network; some call it an addiction (Copeland, 2004, par. 34). Its impact extends beyond cyberspace onto the campus, changing the way people meet. Students can "pre-meet" on Facebook, or if they've met someone only briefly and would like to stay in touch or learn more, they just "facebook" the new acquaintance. "Facebook" is now a commonly used verb on college campuses; browsing the network is known as facebooking (McDonald**,** 2005, par. 8).[18]

As big an impact Facebook has had on college campuses, MySpace has had a wider impact on the general culture of those under thirty. It began in 2003 and since then, as noted above, it has attracted a membership of approximately 27 million people (Williams, 2005, par. 7). Membership in MySpace is open to anyone with the means to acquire a PC and the time to spend online. The growth of MySpace has been phenomenal—it has become so popular that in April 2005 it passed Google in number of hits (Williams, 2005, par. 7). And like Facebook, perhaps even like Google, the impact of MySpace is not limited to the online world. David Card, a cyberbusiness analyst interviewed by the *New York Times***,**

[18] Facebook has thus joined the growing list of technological terms and brands that have become verbs: a technologically savvy individual emails, blogs, IM's, and now, facebooks. It is important to note that more recent terms like blogging not only denote an action, they also help establish a group identity: one who writes a blog may identify as a "blogger," part of an online network, with whom he or she directly interacts, as well as the wide and diverse network of those who keep weblogs.

cites MySpace's early identification with music as well as the creators' incorporation of blogging into the network as instrumental to its growth and impact (qtd. by Williams, 2005, par. 8). Further, Card notes that, while blogging has really been around since the Internet began (in the form of personal homepages), MySpace was one of the first social networks to incorporate it into its format (Williams, 2005, par. 8). While blogging itself has become a major part of cyberculture, much of the scholarly attention on blogs has been focused on those concerned with political issues, which make up only a small percentage of those on the Internet. Many more weblogs are personal, and online interactive diaries are an increasingly popular form of digital self-expression which MySpace has very successfully tapped into.

In fact, MySpace became so successful that it came to be seen as a model for a new kind of information, and advertising, outlet. Instead of attempting to copy the MySpace model, corporate media simply bought the network. In July 2005, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation bought Intermix, the parent company of MySpace, for $580 million. News Corporation executives explained that the investment was a way for the company to reach young people who are difficult to reach through traditional media like newspapers and television (Williams, 2005, par. 11). And so what began as an online "community" for artists, musicians, and various other counter-culture types became the basis for the conservative News Corporation's claim to a larger stake in the new media market. This move is emblematic of the questionable and tenuous nature of cyberspace "communities." We will return to the issue of community later in the essay when we consider the

online "community" as a target for advertising and surveillance and address the potential of online social networks as sites for resistance and counter-hegemonic practice. We must first examine the rhetorical features of online social networks, as the signifying practices of members and sponsors create the network and shape the community that arises from it.

Menu-Driven Identities on Facebook

On both Facebook and MySpace we see what Lisa Nakamura (2002) calls menu-driven identities: the member quite literally constructs his/her identity through the creation of an online profile that is constructed by the member's response to a series of questions. However, this construction isn't simply the result of the autonomous choices of the subject. While an examination of identity construction on social networking sites does confirm that language practices create and shape subjectivity, a concept central to social epistemic rhetoric, it may call into question whether Berlin's (1996) insistence that agency can be attained through the exploration of multiple and varying subject positions can be applied to the virtual world. (This issue will be dealt with in a more in-depth manner in the following chapter on blogging.) As Nakamura points out, the narrowness of options available on an online menu leads to a process of identity construction that challenges the assumptions of those like Turkle (1995) who argue that Web frees one to create and explore new identities apart from societal or physical constraints. The creation of the profile is dictated by the questions posed, and often the user may only choose from a small set of options within a "clickable box." This results in profiles – and online subjectivities—that conform to

dominant political, raced, and gendered labels and roles. Again, as Foucault (1982) argues, subject positions are constructed and made available by the institution (in this case the corporately owned social networking site) and can be filled by various subjects. The subject does not move freely among various subject positions—he or she occupies positions made available and regulated by the discourse of the institution.

In a clear example of the menu-driven nature of identity on Facebook, the member's political identity is limited to five labels from the dominant political discourse: "very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative" and "very conservative." The member must either choose one of these labels or leave the question blank. Such labels frame political identity as a choice between two opposite terms (although one can choose a greater or lesser allegiance to each of these identities) enforcing a simplistic, dualistic representation of political identity. One cannot choose to identify as radical, anarchist, libertarian, or neoconservative. Political identity is thus framed within the rhetoric of the two dominant parties in the U.S. and the acceptable ideological framework established by corporate media, all of which are complicit in maintaining the status quo. Interrogation within the network of the limited nature of the current party system is foreclosed by the profile's menu of terms.

Gender relations are also proscribed by the menus of online social networks. On Facebook, when one adds a friend to their homepage or clicks on a friend's profile, members can go to a menu that asks "How do you know?" the given friend. Among choices such as "Went to school together," "Lived

together," and "In my family," is the choice, "We hooked up." Thus, the menu allows for the representation of relationships in a manner that privileges the male perspective: "hooking up," or engaging in a casual sexual relationship with another person, because of well-established double standards ever present in campus cultures and beyond, is likely to be reflect positively on a man and negatively on a woman. Further, information on relationships is displayed publicly, allowing for this menu and the information it prompts the member to disclose to be used against other members, providing the means for the public disclosure or even fabrication of a sexual encounter. While these are but two examples of the way in which the construction of identity and power relations are conditioned through profile creation within online social networks, they provide a clear illustration of the potential for the perpetuation of hegemony within such networks, and hint towards how "community" might be developed and manifested within social networking sites.

Virtual Communities?

During the development of computers and composition as a field, the Internet has often been viewed as a potential space for community and social change. As Tharon Howard (1997) writes:

> If it could be shown that electronic communities do exist and that they represent radical new sites that enable the formation of resisting subjects, of agencies capable of critiquing old, corrupt, and exclusionary discursive practices found in other media, then those activists and theorists who have called for the increased use of NT [Network Text] to bring about social, political, economic and educational reforms will have a strong foundation on which to base their arguments (p. 115).

However, in order to argue that online social networks are ultimately little more than nodes in a virtual marketplace (or instead, that such sites can provide spaces for collective resistance and reform), we must first establish how exactly, or even if, they function as communities. Further, as J. MacGregor Wise (2003) notes, "One problem in such debates is that the term 'community' is presented as a given, as if we know what that means and we all share the same meaning and ideals" (p. 114). That is, before anyone can begin exploring whether the Web is essentially a medium for the perpetuation of late-capitalist consumer society or if it instead still offers real hope for the development of civic discourse and communal change, the term community must be specifically defined. Likewise, because online social networks are often conceived of as communities, we must first interrogate the term "community" itself in order to offer a critical and pedagogical response to these networks and to determine if (and if so, how) it should be applied.

Wise points to Lee Komito's 1998 article, "The Net as a Foraging Society: Flexible Communities," which clarifies the term community in relation to cyberspace; Wise's and Komito's explorations of the concept of community are not only useful to the general discussion of cyberspace, but they can also help us define more specifically what we mean by community within the context of online social networks. Komito delineates four types of community, relating each type to cyberspace; he makes the distinction between moral, normative,[19] proximate and fluid, foraging communities (Wise, 2003, pp. 114-117). Komito

[19] The normative definition is not essential to this study: it simply refers to the general use of the term community to describe a group of people with common interests or identifications: the community of English teachers or stamp collectors, for example.

argues that while online communities are often idealized as moral or proximate communities, or a combination of both, they can often more accurately be conceived of as fluid, foraging communities.

Moral community is closest to the ideal, utopian notion of community. In such a community "individuals share a common ethical system that constrains interactions among members, emphasizing mutual benefit above self interest…This is community as social solidarity" (Komito qtd. by Wise, 2003, p. 114). This understanding of community is perhaps the general social and political ideal; as such, it is often deployed as the given meaning of the term. The notion of moral communities is often incorporated into the conception of proximate communities on the Web. Proximate communities are based on the conception of community as a space in which people can interact voluntarily or otherwise (Wise, 2003, p. 115). In cyberspace such communities are those that are conceived of as a public space, such as MUDs and MOOs, or even virtual cities (Wise, 2003, p. 115). The utopian cybercommunity, then, is both proximate and moral. Such communities provide an alternative space that enhances "real" social space and in which people can come together for mutual benefit and perhaps even to engage in civic change. However, proximate communities take on the characteristics of offline space in the late-capitalist period: often Web forums and virtual cities are little more than spaces in which corporations can execute advertising strategies and gather personal information (marketing practices that are often tied together).

However, as Komito asserts, the moral and proximate conceptions of cybercommunities may not adequately describe the manifestation of communities on the Web. He asserts that often cybercommunities are best described as fluid or foraging societies based on a nomadic model of community rather than industrial or agrarian models (2003, p. 117). In such a model, communities are not tied to a particular space or "larger macrosocial structures on which they depend" (Wise, 2003, p. 117) Komito argues that online communities more closely match this model: membership in online groups is unstable, members can easily leave online communities and often hold membership in multiple groups (Wise, 2003, p. 117).

Wise points out that, while the existence of proximate, moral communities are most often idealized as a great social benefit of the Web, "what are most often produced are foraging communities and commercialized virtual cities" (2003, p. 117) Indeed, it is clear that commercialized communities on the Web, which can either be proximate or fluid, far outnumber those which exist for the purpose of community support, civic discourse, and collective action. It should come as no surprise that online social networks such as Facebook and MySpace are in fact highly commercialized spaces. We are faced with the question of whether these networks are little more than commodified virtual cities or if they hold the potential to become moral communities that offer space for support and social change.

We must first attempt to define online social networks as communities according to the terms above. We could describe both Facebook and MySpace as proximate virtual communities, as both networks seek to represent a stable

"space" in which individuals can gather. These social networks are indeed represented as a public space in which individuals choose to enter and interact voluntarily as well as involuntarily; however, on both networks great emphasis is placed on the individual. Although the network may be open to the "public," it is a space for the representation of the individual: Facebook is foremost a book of faces, and MySpace is exactly that—a personal, although online, space. Therefore, online social networks could not be described as "moral" communities as members are not bound by a particular ethical system, or ethos. Members do not join for a particular shared purpose or share set of common values. Further, as established above in the analysis, Facebook and MySpace certainly do not meet a central criterion of moral communities: the emphasis of "mutual benefit above self interest." In fact, as noted above, the discursive construction of social networks like Facebook and MySpace privileges self-interest over mutual benefit or the communal exchange of support.

We might best describe the online social networks Facebook and MySpace as a new kind of online community not described by Wise or Komito: proximate yet fluid commercialized communities. Although the networks are represented as stable social spaces (members can always return to their homepage, or space, on the network), membership within them is unstable and overlapping—members of one network may belong to others and may shift between various networks over time. A member might also participate in groups within the networks, again on an unstable and overlapping basis; as a member's interests change so will his/her participation in a given group. A member can easily leave a network quickly, and

there is little in the way of social decorum or pressure that would prevent this. Joining a network is also easy—provided one has the technological means (which certainly cannot be assumed). As such, though these networks can be described and proximate, fluid and commercialized communities, they also reflect the characteristics of the networked multitude as established by Terranova, as well as Hardt and Negri (2000): they are open, self-organizing, emergent systems (Hardt and Negri 103). They thus offer the possibility for the kind of community Hardt and Negri argue is essential to democracy and activism in the globalized digital age: a community that preserves differences while connecting and collaborating on the basis of commonality. They write (2004) that multitude can be understood as an "open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally" (pp. xiv). As I will examine in greater detail below, because they are open and fluid, online social networks are possible sites from which multitude can emerge.

However, as established above, regardless of the fact that they offer the potential for resistance, these networks are certainly commodified sites; not only does their discourse privilege and normalize capitalist ideologies, they are sites for advertising as well as marketing surveillance. As we will see, the commodification of online "community" is further enforced by the invitational rhetoric of the networks—a rhetoric that appears to be based on goodwill and friendship but is actually propelled by competition and individualism.

Invitational Rhetoric: Ideology and Identity

The manner in which online social networks are formed is one of the most important features of these new networks that distinguish them from other virtual communities. In the case of most previous cybercommunities members are drawn to the network because of a particular interest or to fulfill a particular need or want. Members are drawn to newsgroups and listservs because of a specific common interest, whether professional or cultural; online dating services and activist sites draw in members who want to find companionship or take political action. In the case of online social networks, *invitational* rhetoric deploying hierarchical appeals is used to form and expand the network as well as perpetuate hegemonic, capitalistic values. Invitational rhetoric was originally conceived as an alternative to rhetorics of persuasion (Foss and Griffin, 1995). Because it is based on the assumption of equality between rhetor and audience, the listener is not *compelled* to act or change but is invited to and allowed to react however he or she so chooses (Foss and Griffin, 1995, p. 8). Although such a rhetoric was conceived as a more egalitarian, feminist alternative to rhetorics of persuasion and conquest (which force or manipulate the audience into change), it can nonetheless be used as a tool of power.

Barbara Warnick (2001) describes the deployment of this rhetoric in her analysis of print and online appeals in the mid- 1990's urging women to become participants in cyberspace. Much like Berlin, Warnick asserts that the rhetorical critic must study texts as systems, "noting recurrent patterns of appeal, construction of ethos in texts, who can speak, who is silenced, and how identities

are discursively constructed" (2001, p. 6). By examining the patterns of hierarchical appeals in the invitational discourse directed towards women in the mid-1990's with the purpose of attracting them to come online, Warnick uncovers the ideologies embedded in these texts. She notes that such invitational rhetoric privileges terms such as "activity, aggression, currency, technology and wealth," while devaluing their opposites "passivity, hesitancy, convention and poverty" (p. 71).Warnick's recognition and analysis of these hierarchies is based upon Burke's assertion that people are "goaded by the spirit of hierarchy" (Burke qtd. by Warnick, 2001, p. 68). As Warnick writes:

> Burke gave a form or structure to human action that implies that all humans are intrinsically motivated by the principle of perfection, the need to move upward…in the many hierarchies that shape their social, political, and spiritual lives (p. 69).

Invitational rhetoric then plays on this intrinsic motivation by presenting hierarchies of terms and values and appealing to the desire of the audience to identify with the privileged values. As Warnick's analysis makes clear, such hierarchical appeals normalize particular values and silence those who do not conform to or identify with those values.[20]

In the case of online social networks such invitational discourse plays a central role in the construction of the networks themselves: social networks such as Facebook and MySpace are formed and expand through invitational discourse

[20] The appeals that invited women to participate in cyberspace privilege masculine values such as aggressiveness and individualism, while devaluing passivity and collaboration, thus constructing an "'ideal' woman—one who [is] career oriented, opportunistic and prepared to try new things" (86). These hierarchical appeals privilege and normalize masculine values and persuade women to conform to a masculinized identity. The invitational rhetoric used to convince women to participate in cyberspace contributed to the gendering of Web and the construction of a masculinized identity for female Internet users.

that deploys hierarchical appeals which privilege and normalize capitalist values. The growth and structure of the social network is dependent on who members choose to invite into the network or, out of those who are already members, into their "friend" list. Thus, the network is shaped by the acceptance and refusal of invitations. The invitational rhetoric of these online social networks is not only generally hierarchical; it relies on appeals based on the privileging of certain values over others. Both Facebook and MySpace place great emphasis on the acquisition of friends. The manner in which friends are acquired, counted, and displayed, as well as the rhetoric concerning friends on both networks, places great value on the *quantity* of friends a member has, as well as the visual and discursive quality of those friends. The emphasis on attaining great numbers of friends tends to perpetuate a competitive, capitalist ideology.

Before continuing, further attention must be given to the rhetoric of friendship on online social networks. The labeling of members as "friends" seems to contradict the argument that these networks privilege competitive, individualistic values over values of sharing and support. However, it is important to note the ways in which friendships are formed on such networks. Most often, groups of friends appear to form around particular patterns of cultural consumption: networks of friends tend to form around shared appreciation and consumption of types of television, movies, and particularly music. That is, groups of friends correspond to, and no doubt help to create, particular market niches. Consumerism is, of course, based not on communal support, but individualistic desire.

It would also be useful to examine the ways in which relationships on social networking sites are "negativity friendships" that form around shared consumption patterns. Research conducted by Jennifer Bosson (2006) has shown that friendships based on exclusion, on a shared dislike for another individual or group, are often stronger than friendships formed around common affinities. Friendship on social networks may follow this pattern: friends are formed around exclusive tastes in music, fashion, films, etc. These friendships are based not on the shared appreciation for such cultural products, but around the idea that by consuming such exclusive products one is setting him/herself apart from those he/she doesn't like (i.e. the "mainstream). A network of friends is formed in opposition to those who are disliked for their quotidian consumption patterns.

The invitational discourse of online social networks appeals to the member's desire to move up the social hierarchy—to be a member with many (or even the most) of the "most exclusive" friends. The number of friends a member has is also essential to establishing the ethos or credibility of a member. Those with a higher number of friends are more likely to be accepted and respected by other members. Thus the attainment and display of friends plays a central role in the discourse of online social networks. On the member homepages of both Facebook and MySpace the number of a member's friends is prominently displayed, as is the number of hits (or views) a given homepage or profile has received. Images of the friends themselves are also prominently displayed—pictures from each friend's own profile appear on the homepage. Other features of social networks also repeat and reinforce this hierarchical appeal. A page from

MySpace on "promotion" asks, "Do you want to explode your friend list?" and then offers a way to have individuals automatically added as friends whenever they log on to MySpace from a member's personal website (not affiliated with the network). Such an appeal persuades members that "exploding" or rapidly growing one's friend list is a desirable thing—that it is, of course, better to have more friends than fewer friends.

The manner in which "friends" are displayed is also part of the pattern of hierarchical appeals deployed within social networks. On both Facebook and MySpace, a limited number of friends are actually displayed on a member's profile—the rest can be viewed by going to another page that displays all of a member's friends. If a member wants to display on his/her profile the "coolest"[21] or even closest friends, s/he will have different options depending on the network. On MySpace, the hierarchical nature of online friendship is most apparent. Members can actually edit their friend lists, picking their "Top 8" friends for display. The member can also determine the order in which these "favorite" friends are displayed, further reflecting the hierarchy inherent in the discourse of the network. Members of Facebook, on the other hand, cannot choose which friends are displayed on their profile. Instead, friends are randomly chosen from the list for display each time the profiled is viewed. Facebook members, then, must be self-selecting—if they wish their profile to display only certain "cool" people, they must only invite and accept invitations from such people.

[21] Jeff Rice's (2004) observation that the word "cool" has been commercialized within the Web is indeed confirmed by another way one can get friends in MySpace: each time one logs in, pictures of "cool new people" are displayed on the network's homepage. One can then check out the profiles of these cool people, and if they like what they see, invite these strangers to be friends.

Both sites make clear to their members, or audience, that getting as many friends as possible, as quickly as possible, is a desirable goal. The process of inviting and accepting friends becomes competitive, as members attempt to attain as many friends as possible. Interviews with members confirm this. Freshman Ali Scotti, who has 156 friends on Facebook, told the *Washington Post* about his attitude toward Facebook: "I'm not competitive…Well, okay, that's a lie. [I'm] a little bit competitive." (Copland, 2004, par. 16). Thus, a binary between the values of competition and collaboration is established by the invitational rhetoric of online social networks, with competitiveness being the privileged value. Ironically (although not surprising for anyone who has ever attended junior high), the process of gaining friends and connecting to others within the network becomes identified with the value of competition, a value ultimately associated with individualism.

Of course, the value of competition in the discourse of these social networks (in other words, the codes that construct such networks) corresponds with and reinforces the hegemonic ideology of capitalism, which privileges personal material gain over all else. Social interaction within these networks constructs members foremost as individuals with something to gain, as codes that reinforce competitiveness are normalized; it also establishes a worldview based on competition rather than communal sharing and support. While online social networks are often thought of as "communities," the kind of community found in these networks most often ultimately represents little more than a space for

individualist action and expression. MySpace is not known as "OurSpace" for good reason.

Network Sponsors: An Electronic Market

The discourse of online social networks such as Facebook and MySpace not only perpetuates the hegemony of late capitalism through the normalization of dominant cultural codes. Such networks are also used explicitly as sites for the discourse of marketing and consumer surveillance. The extent and depth to which these networks are used this end forces those in computers and composition to interrogate our notion of community and in fact suggests a model of electronic "community" based on a dystopic feedback loop: members who express their individuality on networked homepages according to carefully cultivated demographic norms enroll themselves in corporate surveillance, and this leads to increasingly focused targeted marketing.

This cycle of individual electronic expression, surveillance and advertising on social networking sites suggests an important intersection between Guy Debord's society of spectacle and Foucault's surveillance society. Foucault (1987) dismissed the argument that society and its mode of production are based upon and perpetuated by the exchange and circulation of spectacular images, arguing that "Our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth…" (p. 217). As noted in earlier chapters, for Foucault, power is biopolitical (i.e. power is produced by careful institutional administration of the body from life to death). The introduction of digital technology, however, has accelerated and decentralized the production of

biopower, leading to, as noted in the previous chapters, a "control society" in which power shifts from its primary production in a hierarchical disciplinary system to a system of control that is dispersed and applied through rhizomatic global digital networks (Deleuze, 1990). Power is no longer only produced in disciplinary institutions; digital technology allows for the continual surveillance of individuals at every moment of the waking day.

Debord's theorization of the rise of the image in the society of the spectacle plays an important role in the development of control societies, a role that can be examined clearly within the online social networks. Social networking sites provide the perfect platform by which spectacular culture can be incorporated into what D. N. Rodowick (2001) calls one's "data image"— the image of the individual constructed by various corporate and government data-gathering institutions—as well as the ideal electronic site for the voluntary display of that data image. (p. 216). MySpace and Facebook encourage members to construct their online identity through the identification with popular, spectacular culture: in response to menus, members list favorite music, movies and television, add images from these media (favorite bands, video game characters, etc.) to their profiles, and add music tracks that play while their homepage is viewed. Rather than passively gazing upon it, the member can now interact with the spectacle, further increasing their identification with it. The social network member constructs his/her identity (using digital technology) from the material of spectacle, adding to his/her profile spectacular images and sounds as well as listing preferences for cultural commodities. The member than displays this data

image for all to see—self-enrolling in networks of surveillance, allowing corporations and the government free access to personal information: their likes and dislikes regarding all things (pop) cultural, their connections to other members, even political affiliations.[22] The distinction between the surveillance/ control society and the spectacular society is more than the difference between being watched and watching, although online social networks do allow the member both to become an image to be viewed and a viewer of other images. In Foucault's control society, the living body is the site at which power is produced; in Debord's spectacular society, the real and living has been superseded by the image: the image gains ascendancy over that which it represents, collective action is foreclosed, and the current mode of production is maintained. Both models of power now operate simultaneously in contemporary network society. The outward, spectacular display of one's virtual data image corresponds to the internal production of biopower. Spectacle and surveillance thus both exist in the new media age in a mutually reinforcing relationship.

Social networking sites are not only sites of corporate surveillance but also sites of marketing. These online marketing practices both sell products and construct members as consumers. Traditional online advertising practices as well as new practices specific to social networks are used. Both sites use the standard banner ads seen on most websites, and such advertisements are targeted toward the general demographics of network members. Facebook banner ads, however, can be targeted even more specifically, with different ads for each participating

[22] Further, any original music posted to MySpace becomes, per the site's privacy policy, the property of the News Corporation.

school. Students and local businesses can also advertise on Facebook, narrowing the targeted audience even further. MySpace also uses banner advertisements; it is worth noting that while members can use HTML code to personalize their homepages, members are instructed specifically *not* to write over any of the site's advertisements.

Some of the new marketing strategies used in social networks have perhaps a greater and more insidious effect as such strategies both sell products, construct consumer identities *and* enable corporate surveillance, as they are integrated more seamlessly into the general discourse of the network. Facebook is, for example, now allowing corporations to create customized sponsored groups, or forums, on the network. Student-created groups have been part of the network from its beginning—online groups are created based on offline groups such as fraternities, sororities, political parties, fan clubs, etc. Clearly, such online "communities" have become targets of advertising and surveillance. Now, corporations such as Master Card, Apple, and Victoria's Secret sponsor groups.[23] A brand logo appears in their personal profile of members who sign up for such a group; they also have access to the company's Facebook message board, and receive monthly email newsletters from the company. The message boards become free consumer focus groups for the company. "'I frankly didn't expect people would want to use the boards, but they do,'" says Matt Cohler, Facebook's

[23] The creation of groups by members can also lead to the perpetuation of oppressive representations of women and non-white peoples. Mythili Rao, in "Facing Up Facebook Racism," reports on the creation of a group entitled: "People for the Propagation of the Asian Flesh." According to the Facebook group, its purpose was to "bang out Asians" (n.d., para. 2). Clearly this represents the construction of a group identity that is both sexist and racist. While there may only be a relatively small number of such groups on Facebook and MySpace, their existence points to the truly oppressive potential of this electronic medium.

V.P. of corporate development. "'Every day, there are women on the Victoria's Secret board talking about which products are the most comfortable'" (Newcomb 2005). Members willingly enroll themselves, and their participation not only increases their consumer interest in the product, the company monitors their communication about the product. Such groups become not only targets for marketing, but also surveillance tools. Further, students who join such groups identify not only with the product (as members literally display brand logos on their profiles), but also as consumers, thus perpetuating the consumer culture of the late-capitalist mode of production.

As evidenced by the purchase of MySpace by Murdoch's News Corporation, online social networks are clearly viewed by the corporate world as an important new digital medium for commerce. MySpace is viewed by Murdoch as a major hub of the News Corporation's new media network (Scott-Joynt, 2005, par. 2). Already, Fox television episodes are premiering on MySpace.[24] It is clear that online social networks, like much of the Web, are thoroughly commodified spaces. As such, opportunity for such networks to provide sites for democratic practice and civic engagement is limited. However, as the web has been the site of successful civic discourse, organization and action, it would seem that online social networks should offer some potential as sites for resistance and agency. In order to realize this potential, we must ask if it is possible for online social networks to become communities defined by sharing, support, and collective

[24] Profiles have been created by marketers for the characters of movies on a number of online social networks: Darth Vader appears on Facebook and Ron Burgundy appears on Friendster. One would not be surprised to find profiles of Fox television and movie characters on MySpace.

action rather than sites where "community" is merely a shared space for the display of individualism and convenient target for niche marketers.

Online Social Networks: Sites of Divergence?

Facebook and MySpace are therefore certainly not ideal or utopian cyber-communities. However, because they are emergent systems they do offer the potential for resistance. Although online networks are conditioned by the capitalist environment in which they emerge and can be used as tools of control, they can never themselves be totally controlled. As Terranova (2004) makes clear, while a network may remain stable on a macro level, the behavior of individual nodes within the network, whether people or information, is unpredictable and prone to divergence. As such, as Taylor notes, networks are always dynamic and in flux, changing and adapting as nodes within the network interact and as new information is introduced into the network from the outside (2001, p. 206). Such networks can become examples of what Hardt and Negri call a multitude: a collective that is decentralized, rhizomatic and dynamic. As they write (2004), the Internet is a good image of the multitude "[B]ecause first, the various nodes remain different but are all connected to the Web, and second, the external boundaries of the network are open such that new nodes and new relationships can always be added" (pp. xv). "Smaller" open networks such as Facebook and MySpace can becomes sites of multitude: communities that are held together by commonality, but in which differences are preserved, and can be expressed. Further, because they always offer the potential for radical divergence from the norm, for utterly unpredictable behavior, online social networks cannot be

totalized, and therefore can never be absolutely or totally sites of hegemonic oppression. Online social networks point us towards the kind of virtual sites from which the form of democracy suggested by Berlin (1996) and Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) can emerge. They provide a model of a sprawling, open network in which individual differences are maintained and celebrated, and from which collaboration and collective action could occur. Though sites such as Facebook and MySpace, because of their commercialization, may not themselves be appropriate spaces for the kind of inclusive participatory democratic action envisioned by Berlin as well as Hardt and Negri, they do offer a model of what such an online space might look like. And spaces for agency and resistance will therefore always exist within currently existent online social networks; if we wish to change these networks, to make them more equitable and shape them into the kind of virtual community that helps to foster progressive social change, we must develop and enable our students to use rhetorical tactics for creating sites of resistance and civic engagement within these networks.

The unstable, dynamic nature of the multitude always leaves open the possibility for change, but we need to recognize the limitations of such social formations. We must base our actions on the recognition that just as networks cannot exist in their totality as absolute, unified expressions of dominant economic and cultural powers, they also cannot be remade entirely as sites for resistance and social change. That is, networks like Facebook and MySpace can never be shaped into sites that exclusively enable communal action and the expression of progressive values—hegemonic and oppressive values which

engender individualism and alienation will always remain in some form. We cannot hope to shape a fluid, proximate, and commercialized community that is subsumed by the late capitalist mode of production entirely into a fluid, proximate, and moral community. We cannot hope to change the entire network—its character as a network prevents that. We can, however, establish new spaces with the network that are fluid and moral—spaces which exist for the mutual benefit of all members, based on egalitarian values—and force the network to adapt and change. As Hardt and Negri (2000) make clear, just as power and control in a network is decentralized and fluid, so must our resistance be (pp. 24-25).

At the time of this writing, we have just recently seen an example of successful resistance on Facebook. A new feature appeared on the site that catalogued and displayed all of a member's actions—from how many friends one accepted and rejected to how many messages one wrote to others. The response from members was swift: a number of groups were immediately set up to protest this feature on the grounds that it violated members' privacy. In a matter of days the owners of the site posted a letter of apology and changed the privacy settings on the site to give users control over what actions other members could view. This event points to the fact that members can exert some, albeit limited, influence over the development of such networks.

But if we wish to change the kinds of communities that have thus far been established within existing online social networks or even generally within our emerging network culture, we must begin in the classroom: those in the field of

composition must shift from an understanding of community based on stable consensus, to an understanding of community as multitude. The critique of the ideal of consensus is not new to composition; as early as 1989, John Trimbur introduced the concept of "dissensus" in order to problematize the work of those such as Bruffee, who established consensus as the commonly perceived purpose of collaboration in the classroom. Berlin follows Trimbur in that both represent the classroom as a modern democratic arena in which collective decisions or conclusions are arrived upon through rational critique and debate, but also acknowledges that this debate will always be messy and that it must insist upon the inclusion (and critique) of every position or voice in the classroom (1996, p. 140). However, if we always leave space for contradictory views, how do we keep the collaborative process or classroom discussion from spinning out of control? And on the other hand, if the classroom is to be a site in which collective conclusions are reached, how can we be sure that difference is recognized and preserved? The concept of multitude provides a model of community that allows for difference within a social formation that nonetheless coheres; the network remains connected while individual nodes operate on their own, although in relation to the rest of the network. In the following chapter, I will explore how this networked model of community can be realized in the classroom through the student production of blogs.

In order to realize the potential of online social networks as sites of resistance, those in the field of rhetoric and composition must theorize a pedagogical response focused specifically on these networks. This pedagogy must

address how we can enable students to understand and critique the ways in which the discourse of such networks shape their subjectivity as individuals and as members of groups, as well as understand how their networked data image is used by corporations and government powers. Further, our pedagogy must foster a rhetoric of divergence that points to ways our students can act in resistance to hegemonic norms and shape existing networks or create new networks in accordance to a model of cybercommunity that enables civic discourse, support and action.

Such pedagogies are already beginning to be implemented. In a first-year composition unit I teach on global media, I encourage students to research the connections between corporate media and online social networks and ask them to write arguments addressing the sites and the cultural and economic issues by which they are surrounded. In order to prepare to for writing this argumentative paper, students critically analyze social networking sites in the classroom. The strategies that Berlin suggests for the rhetorical analysis of cultural codes in the composition classroom are particularly useful for the construction of a curriculum focused on critical engagement with the discourse of social networking sites.

In *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* (1996), Berlin provides a narrative account of the process of guiding a class through the critique of the cultural codes embedded in a particular text; this account can be used as framework for teaching students to analyze a wide range of artifacts including digital texts. Berlin's students analyze a *Wall Street Journal* article on cowboys that draws comparisons between the American businessman and the ideal of the western cowboy; his

students pick out key signifiers and discuss how these signifiers are defined by their hierarchical binary relationship to other terms. For example, the cowboy is defined by his relationship to the cowboss, and the cowboss is defined both by the cowboys who work for him and the owners for whom he works (p. 125). Further, working off of Barthes' *Mythologies*, Berlin guides his students through the recognition and analysis of the cultural codes naturalized by the article by placing these terms within the narrative structural forms suggested by the article; students can discuss for example how cowboy narratives construct the ideal American as a lone, tough, and hardworking man (p. 126).

In my classroom, the analysis of a social networking site begins with placing it in a historical, political, and economic context, and students read articles on the purchase of MySpace by the News Corporation and discuss this issue in relation to the ongoing debate over corporate media convergence. From there, the class can examine social networking sites for the binaries they establish: surface over depth, image over real, coolness over friendship, individualism over collaboration. Further, students can consider how the clickable menus of these sites encourage members to construct their online identity through the identification with terms within a binary relationship such as conservative/ liberal. Students can then explore the cultural values that online social networks perpetuate and naturalize by answering critical inquiry questions that consider audience and rhetorical purpose:

- Who has access to Facebook/ MySpace?
- Who does this site target?

- Does the site target or privilege any particular race, gender, class, or age?
- How is the targeting of this audience reflected visually in the language used on the site and in the features offered on the site?
- What is the purpose of the site for owners and for members?
- How are these purposes reflected on the site?
- Who benefits the most from the site: members, advertisers, or owners?

After thoroughly analyzing these sites, students are prepared to develop argumentative essays focused on online social networks and the issues that surround them. My students have written on a wide range of social networking-related topics and used various argumentative strategies in these essays. Prompts that I provide my students:

1) You can argue that a specific online social network should (or should not) be defined as community.

2) You can address ties between corporate media and online social networks. You could, for example, investigate the effects of the purchase of MySpace by the News Corporation (Fox) and/or argue whether it is a good or bad thing for the members of MySpace. You might use the strategies of causal argument and/or evaluative argument.

3) You can do a rhetorical analysis of a specific online social network or website. If you take this approach you should attempt to answer questions like: Who is the audience for this network/ website, and what kind of people join? How are potential members convinced to join (for example: through logos, pathos, and ethos)? Who benefits from the networks? Who benefits the most? Whose values do the networks reinforce? [This last prompt is a continuation of the analysis done in class.]

To be sure, I am not alone in encouraging students to analyze and write about online social networks. Other instructors at my institution have asked

students to do discourse community analyses of online networks. Further, and perhaps most interestingly, instructors have also encouraged the creation of sites of divergence within Facebook, leading to the student establishment of first-year composition related groups like "I Love Knoblauch," devoted to C.H. Knoblauch, whose essay "Literacy and the Politics of Education," is one of the required readings in our freshman writing course. In this chapter we have seen the ways that social epistemic rhetoric can used as a theoretical framework by both scholars and teachers for the analysis of social networking sites. This analysis has hopefully further demonstrated the need for compositionists to engage with the question of community in the network society, to consider how online communities can be co-opted by capitalist interests, and to develop a counter-hegemonic conception of community that resists this co-optation. I argue that the concept of multitude can help us more clearly theorize the kind of classroom community suggested by Berlin in which difference is preserved while common goals are established and worked toward through collaboration. As my next chapter demonstrates, the introduction of blogs into the classroom can help make this theoretical necessity a pedagogical reality. There is much more work to be done, including the systematic development of a more comprehensive first-year composition curriculum related to online social networks. However, divergent and counter-hegemonic rhetorics and pedagogies are already beginning to emerge from our dynamic and open network culture.

Chapter Four:

Life on the Spectacular Screen: Corporate Vs. Cooperative Blogging

Guy Debord (1967) argues in *The Society of the Spectacle* that the spectacle—a stream of images that mediates all existence—becomes the focus of and basis for all life: lived experience recedes into representation, image becomes preeminent over reality, and a system of power is created against which collective action is all but impossible. As noted in Chapter One, we have entered a new stage of spectacle with the advent of the network society. In the stage of spectacle analyzed by Debord, spectators are generally conceived of as entirely passive consumers of media: the spectator sits and watches television or movies, and action is replaced with contemplation (Best and Kellner, 1999). The new media is more interactive: the Web user is able to choose his/her own hypertextual reading path, create websites, and comment instantly on articles, video, and music. On the surface level, this increased interactivity appears to empower the user, offering the possibility of enabling individual and collective resistance.

In this chapter, within the context of my ongoing discussion of network epistemic rhetoric, I provide a more extensive examination of Debord's theory of the spectacle, relating that theory to the electronic discourse of blogs. The rhetoric of the Web, blogs included, is most often seen as more empowering than the discourse of the traditional media; I argue that, although it can in some cases empower the user, the interactive space of the Web also perpetuates and intensifies the spectacle. This chapter therefore, like Chapter Three, challenges the assumption, made by Berlin and other adherents of social epistemic rhetoric,

that technology is somehow inherently democratic. Further, a Debordian critique of blogs can be more productive than such a critique of social networking sites, because of the even greater individualism personal blogs encourage. Alienation is one of the key features and results of the spectacularization of society; this alienation is clearly reflected, and encouraged, within the Web by the discourse of blogs. Further, blog discourse illustrates the ways in which the subject is constructed and shaped by hegemonic forces, even within an electronic space that seems—on the surface— to encourage freedom through individualistic performance and subject exploration. On the other hand, I believe that blogs do offer the potential to become spaces for resistance, and if employed critically, could be a very potent tool in the composition classroom for empowering students and increasing community. Thus, I will consider the ways blogs may still offer the means for resistance and agency. Finally, I provide an extensive discussion of the possible benefits of deploying blogs in the classroom, continuing the discussion of multitude begun in the previous chapter by suggesting specific pedagogical strategies and uses for weblogs that can help create the kinds of rhizomatic communities essential to the radical, heterogeneous democracy advocated by Berlin.

Spectacular Economy, Spectacular Society

Debord (1967) makes clear that the spectacle is not simply another term for the media culture. As human life becomes ever more mediated by technology, electronic representations of existence become central to experience. But, as noted in Chapter One, the spectacle is not only a perpetual stream of media images: it is

"both the result and goal of the dominant mode of production…it represents the dominant model of life" (Debord, 1967, p. 12). In other words, the spectacle is both the base and the superstructure: economic production and cultural and social activity become inseperable. The individual spends time at work constructing and expanding the spectacle, and then spends their leisure time consuming it. Thus, "everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation," as the individual's actions (in the workplace) only contribute to the perpetuation of the spectacle which the worker then passively contemplates during non-working hours (Debord, 1967, p. 12). Image is privileged over the use-value of a product, and the exchange of images becomes the basis of production and the goal of work.

Marx writes of being *passing* into *having*, and Debord argues that, in the society of the spectacle, *having* has passed into *appearing* (16). The social value of an object becomes based on its image, as status is derived from the display of commodities. The material thus gives way to the image. Debord writes: "The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life. The relation to the commodity is not only visible, but one no longer sees anything but it: the world one sees is its world" (1967, p. 42). Jameson (1991) argues that the postmodern period is marked by the collapse of the superstructure and base into one another— all cultural production is also commodity (p. xxi). In prior historical stages, including the modern period of capitalism, the economic and cultural spheres were separate. The emergence of

the society of the spectacle corresponds to the postmodern period of *late capitalist* production.

In the period of late capitalism— in which all cultural production is commodified— all social life is connected to commodity, and society is defined by its relation to commodities (e.g. the workforce is a commodity that produces commodities for the purpose of earning money to purchase commodities). Further, social interaction becomes defined by the identification with and display of commodities; what is important is not the use-value of a commodity but its *image*. The image gains ascendancy over the original.

Interactive Spectacle

Best and Kellner (1999) argue that we have entered a new stage of spectacle. As noted above, Debord's conception of spectacle described both the cultural and economic mode of production. Media production and consumption do not encompass the term spectacle entirely, but they are important elements of its early stage as well as its current stage. Previously, the consumption of spectacular media was a largely passive affair: the viewer sat and watched television or films. Debord's theory of spectacle assumes this model of media consumption. Of course, the new digital media of today *is* more interactive. This new interactivity has been championed by theorists as well as media corporations for its supposedly empowering effects on citizens and consumers (Everett, 2003, p. 16). While the new, more interactive media, specifically the World Wide Web, does offer the possibility for resistance (a topic to which I will return later), it

often falls short of delivering on such claims. And in some ways, the interactive media of the Web serves to reinforce and intensify the spectacle.

While the interactivity of digital technology and the Web is often championed for its potential for collaboration and community building, increased alienation is one of the key characteristics of our spectacular network society. Debord writes, "The images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream in which the unity of life can no longer be recovered" (p. 12). In the society of the spectacle, all social interaction is mediated by technology and individuals can find "community" only through the constant stream of media images, sounds and words upon which all of society gazes. However, this social unity is false, as it is formed on the basis of representations that mediate experience and interaction, while encouraging participation only in individualistic, spectacular consumer culture. Thus, the interactivity of the Web most often does not empower the individual: lived experience passes away into representation within the artificial environment of cyberspace. The individual lives on the screen, interacting through the construction and proliferation of images and replacing human dialogue with the monologic discourse of the spectacle. Debord writes, "Spectators are linked only by a one-way relationship to the very center that maintains their isolation from one another. The spectacle thus unites what is separate, but it unites it only in its separateness" (p. 22).

Political change, therefore, rather than being encouraged and enabled by the "interactive" Web and discursive activities such as blogging, is most often foreclosed by it. Users enroll themselves in a spectacular discursive space that all

but eliminates the possibility for collective action. Direct action is reduced to pointing and clicking a mouse, to typing on a keyboard. Blogs, although they can potentially encourage community, can be a particularly alienating digital discourse. Blogging, even more easily than participation in online social networks, can become monologic performance. Social networking sites are built through online connections, however superficial, among people. A blog, however, can simply be a site in which the individual performs without regard for audience. This is seen most clearly in those blogs which function as "cyber-diaries," online journals that chronicle an individual's daily life. Such blogs can become a forum for individualistic expression, offering the façade of interactivity while providing a space for writers to fill and perform the subject positions provided to them by hegemonic governmental or corporate institutions.

Further, the Web—and blogs— far from becoming primarily an electronic public sphere, and therefore an antidote to alienation, have contributed greatly to destruction of any kind of public sphere. Debord writes,

> At the root of the spectacle lies that oldest of all social divisions of labor, the specialization of power. The specialized role played by the spectacle is that of a spokesman for all other activities, a sort of diplomatic representative of hierarchical society in its own court, and the source of the only discourse which that society allows itself to hear. Thus the most modern aspect of the spectacle is also at the bottom the most archaic (p. 19).

Here Debord notes, much as Habermas argues, that the public sphere—rather than that space in liberal society in which civic matters were discussed and decided upon—now resembles its archaic origins: the court in which royalty presented itself in all its ornamented glory (1989, p. 185). This sphere is now the forum of

public relations in which power presents itself and establishes the discourse by which society understands and defines itself. As Hardt and Negri argue, in the society of the spectacle, the public sphere evaporates (2000, p. 321). On the one hand, it disappears because the spectacle isolates us, separating each individual through their attempt to find unity in the consumption of images and interaction on the screens of cyberspace. This type of "interactivity" reinforces the idea that politicians are celebrities and lowers political participation to the level of participation in activities like sports entertainment. The lack of a space for political action, thus, emphasizes the spectacle of politics itself. On the other hand, the public sphere evaporates because constant surveillance universalizes the public (or to put it another way, privacy disappears).[25]

Life on the Screen

Much of the discussion of the empowering nature of interactive media on the Web has focused on the supposed freedom offered by the ability to move between (or even create) subject positions. As discussed throughout the previous chapters, many in the field of composition and rhetoric have argued that the Web encourages and reinforces the conception of the self—seen in poststructuralist as well as social epistemic rhetorical thought—as an entity that is both composed through discursive practices and embodies multiple subject positions. As we have also discussed, Berlin (1996) argued not only for such a conception of the self but also suggested that the subject could attain agency by moving among and inhabiting various subject positions. Interactive digital technology appears to offer

[25] McGrath, in *Loving Big Brother,* argues that this can be a positive thing: if the one is always in public, than all of life is a performance. Conscious performance for the mechanisms of surveillance then can be used a tactic of resistance.

a means for the kind of subject position exploration advocated by Berlin, thereby aiding in the attainment of a central goal of social epistemic rhetoric—the empowerment of the individual through discourse production. However, it is clear from the previous analysis of online social networks, as well as the analysis of personal blogs that follows, that the supposed fluidity of the subject in digital spaces by no means guarantees empowerment or agency for the individual.

Nonetheless, a number of new media theorists do argue that the Web offers a means to gain agency through the exploration of virtual identities. Sherry Turkle is an early, major proponent of this belief; her book, *Life on the Screen,* provides a study of identity formation on the Web. She argues that identity becomes malleable and fragmented in cyberspace because an individual can assume various identities within online communities, forums, or MUD's, as s/he or he moves from site to site; individuals can even assume and present varying identities (by changing screen names) within a single online forum. Turkle writes, "[Participants] become authors not only of the text but of themselves, constructing new selves through social interaction" (qtd. by Gurak, 2001, p. 39). Turkle argues that the Web allows individuals to move between various subject positions and also provides them the means to consciously *create or construct* subject positions; in essence, they empower the individual to construct his/her own identity. Further, J. David Bolter (1999) similarly argues that the ability to move between various subject positions is the "major freedom our culture can now offer" (p. 245).

Such claims regarding empowerment and freedom through the exploration or construction of subjectivity offered by the interactive media of the Web are

problematic. As noted earlier, Foucault (1982) makes clear that the individual does not create his or her own subject or choose to move at will between various subject positions. The discursive practices of institutions and disciplines create subject positions that may be filled "in certain conditions" by any number of people. Therefore, contrary to Turkle and Bolter, subjectivity cannot be constructed consciously by the individual nor can a subject move freely between various subject positions. Instead of offering freedom, interactive spectacular media, produced and distributed by institutions in the form of media corporations, play a central role in production of subjectivities that fit within the dominant, normalized ideological framework.

Anne Everett (2003) argues that the Ideological Corporate Apparatus (ICA) has now displaced the Althusserian Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), as huge media conglomerates play a larger role in the reproduction of the dominant ideology than even the school, which previously was the most powerful ISA (p. 13). According to Althusser, capitalist ideology is reproduced and the relations of production are maintained by the rhetorical practices of a wide range of societal institutions such as the school, family, church, and legal system. These institutions are examples of the ideological state apparatus (ISA). Such institutions normalize and maintain the status quo, a mode of production based on the exploitation of the worker, through ideology rather than violence. Schools, for example, teach knowledge and skills in ways that encourage submission to the dominant ideology and its practice—a process that can be clearly seen in those schools operating on the paradigms of meritocratic and liberal culture literacy.

However, in the period of late capitalism, the school is no longer the most powerful ISA. As Everett asserts, the school has been replaced by the communications industry as the institution most responsible for the reproduction of the current material and social relations. As such, the ideological corporate apparatus (ICA) has replaced the ISA. As already huge media conglomerates merge,[26] their power to influence and manipulate the individual increases. The ICA works much like the ISA, although now in a globalized and digital environment, enrolling the citizen in the late-capitalist mode of production through the management of knowledge and the creation and distribution of entertainment and products in ways that construct the subject solely as a consumer. The Web, because its content is heavily determined by multinational media corporations, most often offers a very limited range of subject positions, rather than the ability to move freely among them. As Laura Gurak notes, "[M]ore and more of the Internet is being used to make money, gather our personal information, protect corporate intellectual property, and encourage us to shop" (2001, p. 10). The Internet, because it emerged from the milieu of late capitalism, has always been a tool of the ICA: a rhetorical medium used to not only to perpetuate the oppressions and inequalities of current mode of production but also to limit rather than increase the agency of the citizen.

Further, the interactivity of the Web encourages the spectacularization of life, as it encourages the conception and presentation of identity as image; indeed, it enables the user to piece together an online identity composed entirely of

[26] The merger of AOL with Time Warner being the preeminent example of this phenomenon.

spectacular media images. Individuals construct personal websites, blogs, and homepages in online social networks by composing multi-media collages of spectacular culture. These sites are constituted by the media images with which the individual identifies—they are filled with images of the user and the popular spectacular culture (e.g. bands, cartoons, movie stars).[27] Even the backgrounds of such sites can be composed of popular media images. Images from movies and television serve as the online avatars for members of online discussion forums—many of which focus on discourse about spectacular media (e.g. discussions of sports teams and pop stars). Many forums even discuss commodities themselves., In this way, individuals present an image of themselves by listing all of their cultural tastes in the texts of homepages and blogs, further reinforcing their identification with spectacle.

Spectacular Blogging

I define the personal blog genre for the purposes of this paper as weblogs created by individuals that concern those individuals' reflections and opinions and that are (at least originally) an unpaid leisure activity—distinct specifically from those blogs that originate in the news media or just generally focus on politics. Most scholarly and popular and popular discourse concerning blogs has focused on political blogs; such blogs have thus been examined for their effect on traditional news sources, as well as their supposedly democratizing effect. Political blogs, however, only make up only three percent of the overall

[27] The new media definitely play an important role in what Adorno and Horkhiemer call the "culture industry": the Web is a site in which a infinite range of mass produced culture can be instantly called up with a click of the mouse. However, though the culture is mechanically reproduced in the era of the Web, it is no longer broadcast—it is narrowcast.

blogosphere; personal blogs account for a great majority of the overall number of blogs (Jones and Young, n.d, p. 6). Because they are not attached to media corporations, one might assume that personal blogs might be more resistant to spectacularization. Further, unlike many Web forums or all online social networks, personal blogs are not *necessarily* obsessed with the culture industry or owned by multinational media corporations. Nevertheless, many personal blogs can be understood as manifestations of the spectacle.

One example is "Dooce" (see Figure 1.), perhaps the most famous personal blog.[28] Started in 2001 by Heather Armstrong, it gained national fame when the writer was fired from her job for posting blog entries about her workplace. The blog consists of entries that detail her day-to-day life. There is no particular topic or theme, the writer simply describes her life, offers reflections upon it, and posts pictures.What makes this blog unique is that the writer supports herself, and her husband, entirely on its proceeds—which she gathers from the companies that place advertisements on her page. Thus, her blog offers an excellent example of the commodification of life within the spectacle. Armstrong has turned her life into a public spectacle and draws enough devoted spectators that she is able to make a living from it. Armstrong's chronicle of her personal life is so popular that multinational companies advertise on her blog: her daily life is juxtaposed with "dazzlingly" spectacular advertising. Further, she, and her blog, is well known enough that she has contributed to a print magazine, as the post below notes.

[28] The information from this paragraph can be found by exploring the profile section of the blog, **http://www.dooce.com**.

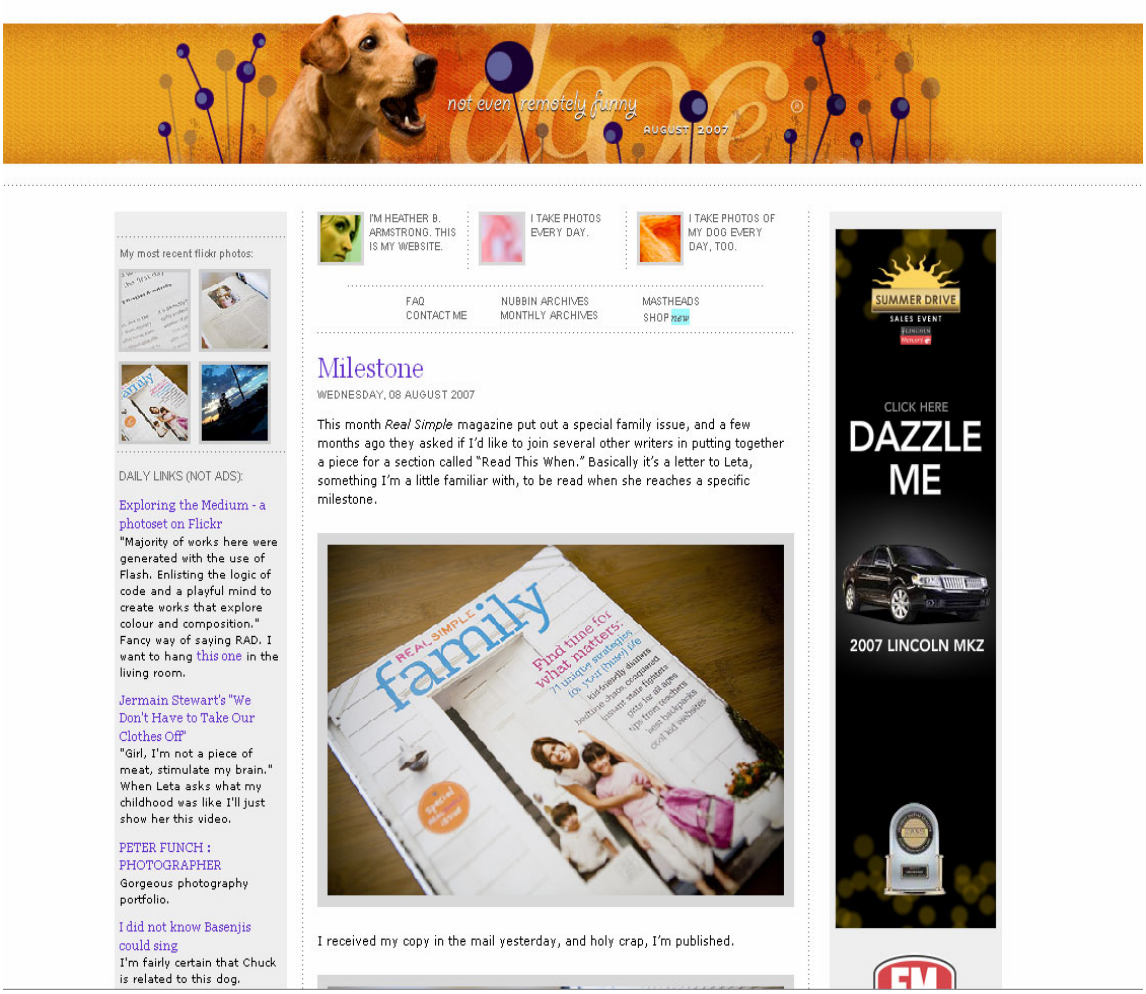


Figure 1. Dooce.

Of course, there are examples of personal blogs that are explicitly occupied with discussion, analysis and evaluation of popular spectacular culture. There are, for example, numerous wide ranging personal blogs focused on sports. Here I refer to the personal blogs started by writers that analyze, discuss, and opine on professional leagues, specific teams, even specific players. These blogs may be directly or indirectly related to the sports franchises themselves. The writers of these blogs are not employees of the teams— merely devoted fans who spend their time writing on the web about their favorite team. Sometimes such blogs are so successful that sports bloggers (specifically in the case of Major

League Baseball) have actually been hired by professional teams (Jones and Young, p. 9), or in the case of the blog seen below, hired by the sports network ESPN. Henry Abbott's "True Hoop," (see Figure 2.) was originally a personal blog focused on professional basketball. He gained such a wide readership that he was hired by ESPN and his blog is now part of the network's website:

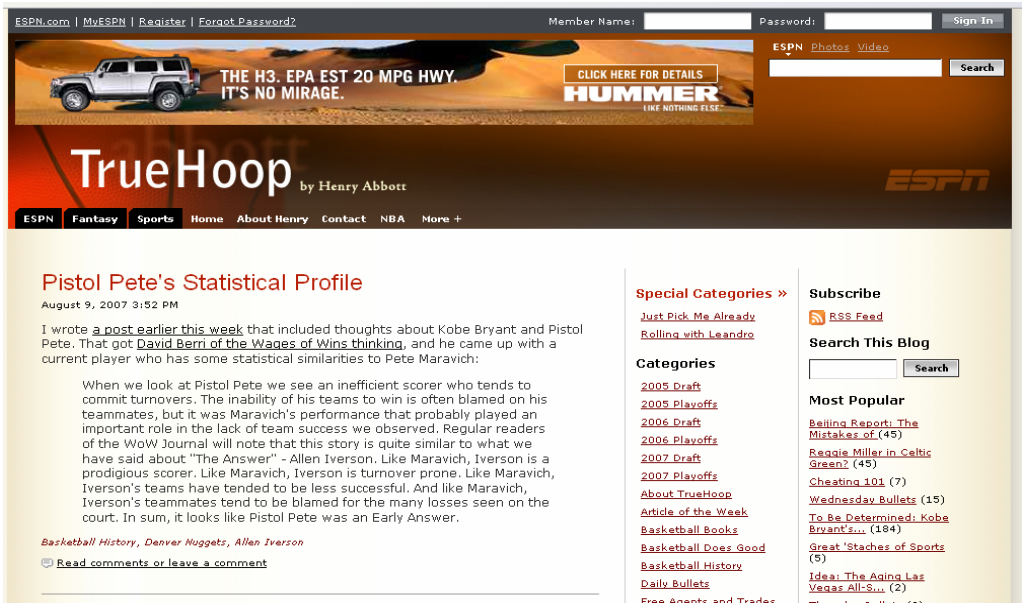


Figure 2. True Hoop

As one can see, this blog has been fully incorporated into the multinational corporate media: note both the ESPN logo, as well as the Hummer advertisement that supports the corporate network. It is tempting to view Abbot's incorporation into ESPN as an example of capitalism recouping what had arguably been part of the "gift economy" of the Internet; that is, as an appropriation by a multinational corporation (ESPN is owned by Disney) of what had been a voluntarily produced free service/ forum for basketball fans.

Instead, it may be more useful to consider such blogs examples of what Tiziana Terranova calls "free labor" (2004, p. 88): the labor that individuals

voluntarily contribute to the late capitalist digital economy through their participation in online activities such as blogging, chatting and message boarding. Terranova argues that this free labor is indicative of the subsumption of the digital culture and economy under late capitalism:

> Free labor is a desire of labor immanent to late capitalism, and late capitalism is the field that both sustains free labor *and* exhausts it. It exhausts it by subtracting selectively but widely the means through which that labor can reproduce itself: from the burnout syndromes of Internet start-ups to underretribution and exploitation in the cultural economy at large. Late capitalism does not appropriate anything: it nurtures, exploits, and exhausts its labor force and its cultural and affective production (2004, p. 94).

From Terranova's viewpoint, the free labor of blogging (along with other online activities) emerges from and perpetuates late capitalism; in other words digital production (cultural and otherwise) does not initially exist outside of capitalism, and is then recouped by it. Such production is immanent to late capitalism and sustains it. Thus, whether Henry Abbot produces "True Hoop" as a leisure activity for himself and fellow basketball fans, or receives a salary from ESPN to do so, he is engaged in free labor that constructs and perpetuates the late capitalist mode of production.

Because they derive entertainment value from lively discussions of sports (or celebrities, or the fashion industry, or music, etc.), individuals contribute willingly and without recompense to the culture industry, volunteering, in essence, to contribute their labor to the maintenance and construction of multinational media empires through their personal blogs which essentially act as advertisements for specific teams and sports more generally. (It should be noted

here that not all sports blogs are positive—some are critical of team and league management. However, as the adage goes, any publicity is good publicity.)

This blurring of the lines between work and leisure exemplified by "free labor" is another mark of the current ongoing emergence of the control society; it is also a mark of the new interactive stage of the spectacle. D.N. Rodowick writes that we are in the midst of "a long and brutal historical transformation that already has been taking place for some time wherein an industrial and disciplinary society yields to a cybernetic society of control and a modernist culture of representation is displaced by an increasingly digital and 'audiovisual' culture" (2001, p. 205). As noted in the previous chapter, the shift from the disciplinary society to the control society theorized most explicitly by Deleuze and the society of the spectacle described by Debord are not mutually exclusive theories of societal development. *The Society of the Spectacle* was written during and describes an early stage of the shift towards digital culture described by Rodowick. The cyber-technology that enabled the construction of the control society was at a nascent stage; the shift from a culture of representation to one in which the image takes preeminence over the material was already well under way.

In the control society, the lines between labor and leisure-time are nearly erased. On one hand, work for one's employer is no longer confined to the workplace. For example, Rodowick notes that the Web, along with handheld digital devices, allow the workplace access to the worker at all times wherever s/he might be (p. 218). Further, the individual enrolls him/herself in these control mechanisms, subjecting themselves to constant surveillance, whether through the

purchase of GPS guidance systems for automobiles or through the use of a discount card at the grocery store that tracks one's every purchase.

On the other hand, the interactive, spectacular Web further blurs the lines between labor and leisure as it enables individuals to play an active part in constructing the spectacle through leisure activities like blogging. Previously, in the earlier stage of the spectacle, the individual spent his/he time at work constructing the spectacle and then consumed passively at home during leisure hours. In the control society, in which the interactive stage of the spectacle has emerged, the individual, as a leisure activity, can continue to construct the spectacle at home through personal blogs. This active participation increases the reach and strength of control over subjects in contemporary society, as "interaction" with spectacle increases the individual's identification with it.

Citizens of the control society provide free labor to a variety of entertainment corporations; it is important to note that the work of bloggers can benefit those who provide a form of entertainment as well as those who distribute that entertainment. For example, an individual who blogs about basketball or baseball benefits individual teams, the sports organization (the NBA or MLB) *and* the media corporations that broadcast games and provide coverage. Bloggers benefit the music, television, and film industries in a similar manner. This is, in many ways, much less innocuous than the spectacle-construction that occurs at work; individuals are unknowingly continuing to build the spectacle through a seemingly neutral entertainment activity. However, unlike the promotion of the

spectacle that occurs simply when one passively participates, individuals are actively but unknowingly creating the spectacle during their "free" time.

Rhetorics of Resistance in the Blogosphere

Despite his description of the spectacle as a seemingly totalizing force, Debord does allow for the *possibility* of resistance. Indeed, we can find spaces of divergence and resistance in the blogosphere, just as we have found in online social networks. Rhetorics of difference and change can never be entirely eliminated from the dynamic network of the Web. Before considering examples of subversive or resistant blogging practices, it is useful to first consider Debord's position on the possibility of resistance in the society of the spectacle in contrast to the position of Baudrillard, the theorist with whom Debord is most often identified.

Debord's commitment to the possibility of resistance is the reason his theory of spectacle is preferable to Baudrillard's conception of simulation and simulacra, a theory of postmodernity that owes much to Debord's work but takes it to a nihilistic extreme. Baudrillard (1999) writes, "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (p. 2).[29] According to Baudrillard, the sign no longer refers to reality, and referents with existence independent from representation exist no longer. They are simulacra, signs without originals. As Jameson notes, postmodernity is marked by the shift from a modern culture that

[29] Brummett explains with an example: "In simulation the map proceeds, engenders, and generates the territory, in the sense that a map of Middle Earth is part of the mechanics of generation of the simulation which is Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings.* In that sense a simulation is a set of signs that creates its own reality but refers to no reality outside itself" (12).

represents nature to a culture that only refers to other culture (1991, p. ix). The poles of reality and representation "implode" and we are left with representations of representations (Fiske qtd. by Brummett, 2003, p.12).

While Debord believes that in the society of the spectacle the representation has achieved ascendancy over reality (almost to the point that reality is completely obscured), he does not believe that the real is no more. Thus, unlike Baudrillard, his theory leaves open the possibility of resistance. As Best and Kellner write:

> Debord refused to abandon the attempt to interpret and change reality. Debord peered into the shadows of a reified unreality, but drew back to report and critique what he had seen; there is an implosion of opposites, but the separate poles retain their contradictory identity; illusion overtakes reality, but reality can be recuperated (p. 12).

Although he recognizes that the spectacle may seem to be a totalizing force that completely overcomes and destroys reality, Debord makes clear that image and reality are still distinct and that the real still exists. Thus, the spectacle can be resisted through works of critical hermeneutics, of which Debord's book is an example (Best and Kellner 1998, p. 12).

Further, Debord advocates the practice of *detournement*: the rhetorical appropriation of spectacular culture and recontextualizing it so that it becomes explicitly oppositional to the spectacle (p. 146). Probably the most obvious example of contemporary *detournement* can be seen in the work of Adbusters (see Figure 3), a collective that alters and recontextualizes advertisements (or corporate brand icons), resignifying them so that their messages are oppositional to those originally intended by the advertisers. Thus, the cultural production of the

corporation is appropriated and turned against the corporation, and capitalism itself:



Figure 3. Adbusters Spoof Ad.

Detournement can put the power of resistance in the hands of ordinary people. In fact, as I will note in the following chapter, *detournement* can also be taught in the composition classroom as a particularly affective visual rhetorical strategy.

In the age of interactive spectacle, possibilities for public *detournement* and other types of resistance are made possible through the public nature of the Web. Possibly the widest ranging and most important impact of the Web has been its democratization of the top-down, hierarchical, corporate media. And more specifically, the emergence of the weblog, in comparison to other genres of electronic Web-based discourse (such as email, Webpages, or online social networks), has had perhaps the most profoundly democratizing effect on the mass media. Before considering the effects of blogging on mediated public discourse, it

is important to note the ways in which the Web itself has opened up the mediascape to wider range of voices, including those resistant to the spectacle. Because the Web is more open and not subject to many of the forms of direct control to which the traditional media is subject, it can provide a platform from which works of critical hermeneutics and *detournement* can be distributed. For example, the full text of *Society of the Spectacle* is available on two separate websites along with a number of other Situationist documents including examples of *detournement* created by the Situationists.[30] The Web can also facilitate the creation of *detournement*. Digital technology allows for the quick and easy manipulation of images—with access to the Web, a wide range of people can appropriate images by downloading them and then resignifying them to create oppositional meanings. In fact, with the advent of open source photo editing tools like Pixel, this type of resistance has become much easier. And, of course, the Web is a space in which a large number of people can then view such artifacts of resistance. Several websites that feature detourned images already exist. For example, Adbusters has a website which offers a number of examples of detourned advertisements. The networked nature of the Web provides the possibility that even the attempt to resist through *detournement* can be seen by many. In 2001 emails between Johan Peretti and Nike became widely known to the public through circulation on the Internet. The emails concerned Peretti's unsuccessful attempt to customize his personalizable Nike I.D. shoes with the word "sweatshop" (McCaughey, 2003 p.10).

[30] The Situationists were a collective of artists and thinkers that formed in the late 60's in France. Debord was a central member.

Further, the Web provides a space in which the alienating effects of the spectacle may be overcome by facilitating the organization of collective resistance. The Web has, for example become instrumental in the organizations and actions of the labor movement. Union leaders and activists, have used the web to create permanent outlets for information pertaining to labor's struggle for social and economic justice. Activists, who have created websites such as "LaborNet," "Cyber-picketline" and "Labourstart," use the web to provide information to members and the public concerning meetings, strikes, boycotts.[31]

However, the weblog has had perhaps the most profoundly democratizing effect on the media. Theorists of rhetoric and composition have been particularly attentive to how the discourse and rhetoric of blogs has transformed the mediascape. As Dennis Jerz (2003) notes, "Weblogs are changing the rhetoric of hyperlinks, challenging the dominant models of mass communication (in which professionals determine what news is worth reporting and what is worth ignoring), and exposing hundreds of thousands of non-programmers to the experience of publishing online." Although much of the scholarship on blogs in the field has thus far focused on pedagogy, scholarship on rhetorical theory is also very useful for defining and analyzing the ways that blogs have fundamentally altered media discourse and perhaps generally changed the dominant model of mass media.

[31] The most famous success has been the mid-nineties cyber-campaign against Bridgestone tires. In 1994, Bridgestone illegally fired 2300 striking workers. An Internet campaign was launched and the transnational corporation was so overwhelmed with messages that in 1996 it capitulated, rehiring all of the fired workers (Herod, 1998, p. 25).

Kathleen Welch (2004) argues that the vocabulary of rhetoric needs to be applied to blogs because such an application reveals that blogs certainly employ a sophistic rhetoric. Richard Lanham's discussion of the parallels between complexity theory and rhetoric, mentioned in Chapter Two, is again helpful. To recap, Lanham (1993) argues that sophistic rhetoric can be understood as an open, emergent system that challenges the closed and static system of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. Similarly, the discourse of weblogs can perhaps be understood as sophistic rhetoric that challenges the entrenched, static and top-down discourse of the mainstream media.[32] Isocrates, for example, encourages a multi-perspectival approach to knowledge, viewing knowledge as dynamic and shifting, based on individual experience and the cultural contexts surrounding the individual in a specific moment. The rhetoric of blogs is similarly dynamic, incorporating multiple perspectives and changing as each new voice is added. Further, blogs are formed in response to specific cultural moments, strongly connected to culture by the experiences of varying individuals. Finally, blogs democratize knowledge and Truth, providing a voice to anyone with the ability to manipulate the genre. This can be compared to Isocrates' argument that truth and knowledge are available to and indeed constructed by anyone who can be taught rhetoric. (This, of course, is in opposition to Plato's and Aristotle's belief in a static and absolute Truth that is available only to the philosopher.) In contrast to the rhetoric of blogs, the discourse of the mainstream media is centralized, closed, and authoritarian. It always corresponds to a Truth: the normalized ideological

[32] As Jerz notes, blogs are indeed emergent systems.

framework that determines the acceptable range of political opinion. And this mainstream media discourse is transmitted downward from an authoritarian and an ever-increasingly centralized force—the multinational media corporation. The sophistic rhetoric of blogs offers an alternative to the closed, top-down system of the mainstream media—an alternative that may perhaps force that system to change permanently towards a more democratic and open system of public communication.

Political blogging has perhaps had greatest effect on the mediascape; blogs such as the DailyKos and Talking Points Memo have done the most to "level the playing field" to allow more voices to have an impact in the political arena. Talking Points Memo, started by Josh Marshall, for example originally broke the news that the U.S. Justice Department had perhaps illegally fired nine U.S. Attorney Generals.[33] However, at least in the U.S., although it has allowed greater access to the political arena, and provided the opportunity for a wider range of voices, political blogging most often operates within the normalized ideologies of the country.[34] Most political discussion on blogs is framed within the debate between the two major political parties, both of which support neoliberal capitalism. Political blogging has thus been a limited site for discourse that is truly resistant to the hegemonic order; in fact, it perhaps perpetuates hegemony by providing examples of political discourse which can be falsely labeled "far

[33] See Paul McLeary (2007).

[34] Personal blogs have also become a space for public intellectual: academics such as Michael Berube share thoughts and critique with a wide, non-academic audience, thereby bridging the gap between the academic and the public that has widened over the 50 years (Kates 382-385). However, like political blogs, most "academic" blogs also operate within the norms of mainstream politics.

left" by the mainstream old media, which results in the marginalization of truly leftist voices to the fringes of acceptable discourse.

Personal blogs offer the possibility for resistance in the blogosphere not yet seen in the realm of political blogging. This potential is still largely unrealized. However, a number of personal blogs exist that demonstrate the ways in which this electronic genre could perhaps become an important site for resistance to the spectacle. Blogs have begun to be used as tools for worker organization and activism. Personal blogs such as those written by Eric Lee, founder of the LabourStart website and author of *The Labour Movement and the Internet*, focus on the discussion of the organization and resistant activities of the labor movement. Blogs could be a particularly useful means of communication in the activist community, whatever the cause, because of the ease in which they can be started and maintained. Further, blogs can enable resistance to proceed on the Web in a rhizomatic fashion, bypassing the need for centralized sources of information and communication.

"Wal-Mart Sucks" (see Figure 4.) provides a useful example of the personal blog as site of worker resistance. The blog is maintained and moderated by Kenneth J. Harvey, a novelist and activist. Harvey contributes little to the blog; it consists almost entirely of posts by employees of Wal-Mart, documenting the unethical and illegal actions of the company. Most posts concern the experiences of hourly workers: for example, the testimony of an employee who was fired for attempting to take a week off to care for her dying father, or the testimony of another employee who was fired for declining to accept a certificate recognizing

him for 10 years of employment. The blog also includes posts by salaried managers



Figure 4. Wal-Mart Sucks

exposing Wal-Mart's unethical treatment of employees. Although this blog may have a limited effect on company or governmental policy, it does provide a public space for employees to air their grievances and contribute to the public debates over the company and the neoliberal practices that have led to its unparalleled growth and power.[35]

Personal blogs can also perhaps become sites of resistance through *detournement.* "Byrneunit," (see Figure 5.) is an example of a blog that demonstrates at least the potential for *detournement* in the blog genre. (However,

[35] It should be noted that it is impossible to verify the claims that are posted to this blog. The overall effectiveness of the blog is therefore compromised by its questionable ethos.

because its content is not politically committed, it cannot be considered an example of *detournement*.) The writers (a married couple) take pictures of their television during selected programming (usually culturally-ridiculous programming like Beverly Hills 90210) and then display these still shots along with commentary.

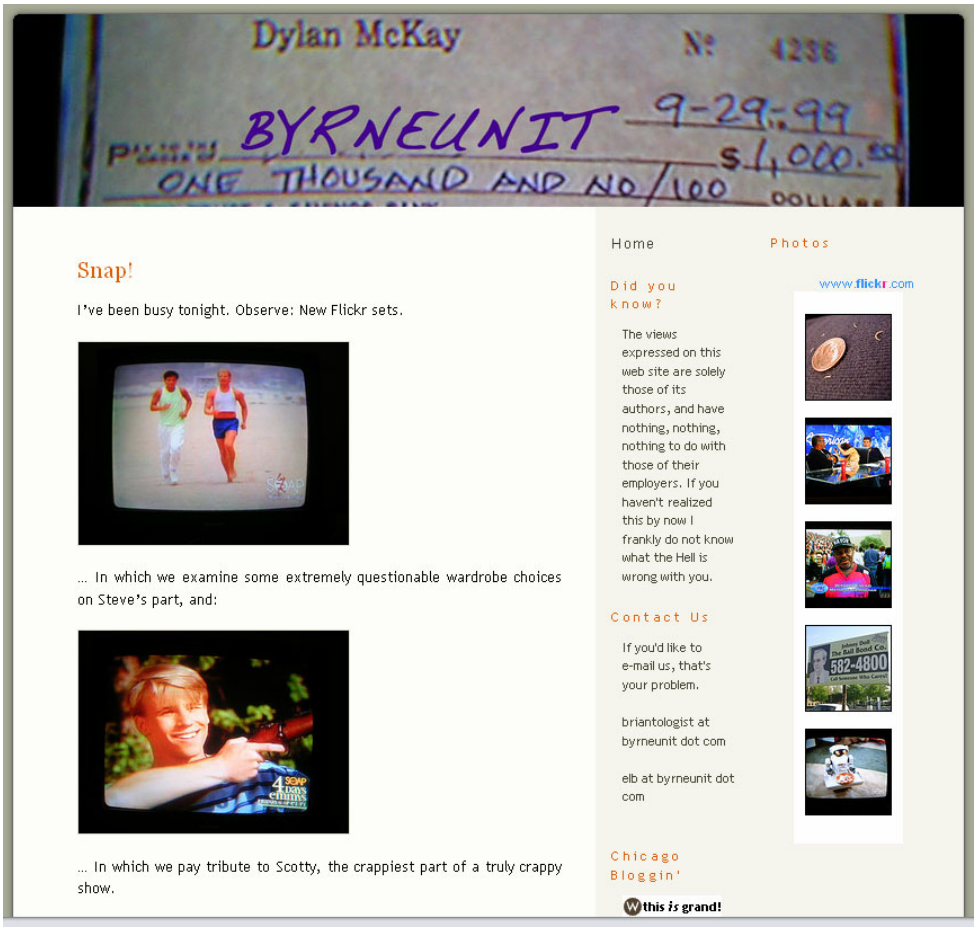


Figure 5. Byrneunit

While their comments are ironic and humorous rather than oppositional, the blog does force the reader outside the normal relationship to television, providing a distance in which the reader is made particularly aware of the artificiality of the screen. There are several layers of screens, or mediation, that separate the viewer

from the subjects of this blog: the computer screen, the screen of digital camera used to capture the television screen, and the television camera used to film the actors. Finally, the couple uploads the pictures they've taken of their television screen into Flickr, an online site for the storage and display of digital photos. Byrneunit thus illustrates the Baudrillardian critique of late capitalist society: they exemplify his concept of simulation and simulacra: we see several layers of representation and mediation, but there exists no original from which these representations proceed. Although this blog is not an example of *detournement*, it does perhaps demonstrate the possibility that Debord's favored form of cultural criticism could be performed within the genre of the blogs. *Detournement* could perhaps be created, for example, if the screen shots featured on "Byrneunit" were paired with oppositional, rather than simply humorous, commentary.

While blogging does hold the potential to become a resistant activity, it is important to mention that examples of resistant blogs are still few and far between. Though blogs have opened up the mediascape to a wider range of voices, most people tend to use the electronic genre for discursive activities that either actively perpetuate the hegemonic order, or at the very least operate within the norms of the status quo.

Blog Pedagogy

As noted in the previous chapter, if resistance and agency is possible in the network society it must be fostered through the creation of communities based on the concept of multitude. Berlin wrote (1996) of the importance of classroom discussion and debate as preparation for participation in democratic society, and

supported a conception of community and democracy as a dynamic heterogeneous network of individuals. One of the goals of network epistemic rhetoric must be the encouragement of such discourse communities in the composition classroom in order to help create a democracy of the multitude in the future. This kind of rhizomatic community can be fostered by requiring students to practice composing weblogs as an electronic genre of writing.

Much of the work on blogs (the little that has been done) within the field of composition and rhetoric has largely focused on how writing teachers can take advantage of the changes that Jerz notes and enable students themselves to participate in and profit from the democratization of the mediascape. Blogs are championed as a way to introduce students to online publishing, providing novice writers access to the digital public sphere. Blogs are also used in classrooms to encourage and enable collaborative and collective writing. Barclay Barrios' (2005) article, "Blogs: A Primer," provides an introduction to the genre of blogs, offering suggestions about how teachers and researchers can enter the blogosphere and how they can enable students to do so as well.

Further, both Colin Brooke (2005) and Clancey Ratliff (2006) argue that blogs have the potential to build community and enable collaboration in the writing classroom. Brooke argues that blogs can help to make a class closer and better connected while also helping to de-center it by enabling connections beyond the classroom and altering traditional instructor-focused power relations. That is, as Brooke puts it, blogs can potentially have both centripetal and centrifugal effects in the classroom. They can both pull the class inward, linking

the class closer together, while also connecting the classroom to the outside. He argues that blogs can help foster a sense of community in the classroom while highlighting the blog in the classroom context as part of a "small network" (the network of other blogs created by students in the class) that links to any number of other texts outside of that network. Students can thus participate in the public sphere by linking to and posting (or "publishing") responses to articles, websites, news items, etc on their personal blogs. Further, blogs can help shift focus away from the central presence of the instructor and encourage rhizomatic rather than hierarchical classroom relations. Students can respond to *each other's* writing, instead of directing all classroom discourse back towards the instructor. The public web of student posts and student responses to those posts emerges and evolves on its own. While the instructor may contribute, his/her posts and responses are just part of the network— classroom discourse needn't always flow back towards him or her. Although the instructor is an audience for the blog posts and the student responses to those posts, s/he is but one potential audience. (Of course, it is therefore essential to emphasize to students that what they write can be viewed by anyone with access to the web.) It is worth noting that this further affirms the previous arguments regarding ability to change power flows inherent in the sophistic nature of the Web.

Ratliff notes that blogs can help foster a "close community ethos in the classroom." She accomplishes this by encouraging students to blog on topics of their own choosing and grading only on participation. Students can learn about each other and share ideas and opinions by reading and commenting upon each

other's blogs. Additionally, students can become closer on a personal level as they share ideas and opinions together through the informal genre of the blog. Ratliff suggests that a central focus on the instructor can be further lessened by the institution of a grading policy based only on participation. Further, the discursive space of the blog can provide opportunities to "speak" for students who might be silenced in the face-to-face classroom, helping to ensure that each member of the discourse network has a distinct voice. Although blogging as part of a composition course admittedly does not create the "achieved utopia" that Faigley (1992) suggested the networked classroom might be, it does provide the possibility for otherwise marginalized students to come to voice. The centrifugal and centripetal effect blogging has on the small network of the classroom creates a discursive community that can be understood as a multitude: de-centered and heterogeneous but coherent.

Though the blogging assignments I have developed are less open-ended and more formal than the assignments suggested by Ratliff, I have found that student blogging can produce critical and engaging writing as well as a classroom "multitude." Blogging plays a major role in a course I have developed that focuses on issues of globalization and new media, which I will detail further in the final chapter. The course involves a strong emphasis on the production of digital texts, including blogs. Students are required to create, among other digital texts, "News Blogs." As part of a unit on corporate media and digital technology, students read, watch, listen to, and then critique a variety of news sources, looking specifically for bias, filters, and commercial sensibilities prevalent throughout the

multinational news mediascape. To create their News Blogs, students first find and link to news stories (or clips from television or radio news). They then post detailed responses to each story, commenting on both content and the aforementioned factors. Students are provided an assignment sheet that prompts them to consider a range of specific questions:

- What is your reaction to the news piece?
- Did you already know about the issue? If so, did the piece provide you with any new information? Did it leave any important information out? Did it change your thinking about the issue or other issues? Why or why not?
- Do you detect a political bias in the news piece? Some news sources are explicit about their political bias. How does this come out in the piece? Other news sources are not explicit about a political bias but have one nonetheless. Try to identify it based on how the information is presented in the piece.
- Some questions to consider when identifying bias:
    - Whose point of view does the news piece emphasize?
    - What assumptions does the story seem to be based upon?
    - Does the story seem to leave any information out?
    - Does the news piece contain any commentary or opinion? If so, are the assertions made backed up with evidence?
- Does the news piece use images? If so, describe them and explain how they affect your reaction to the piece. Are images used to support a specific point of view on the issue?[36]

Students are asked not only to locate and post news items on a specific issue but also to critically engage with both the topic and the presentation of the topic. Students are also asked to compare the ways that various news sources deal

[36] The original assignment sheet, for paper-based "News Logs," was developed (2004) in collaboration with Charlie Potter and Regina Martin.

with a single issue; this helps students identify political biases and the rhetorical strategies used to frame a story in a particular light. It can also help students to recognize the biases in the most seemingly "neutral" types of resources (i.e. corporate national newspapers and network television news programs). In other words, I have found that students, no matter their political affiliation, can generally detect bias in sources that are overwhelmingly politically left or right (i.e. Fox News or The Nation) but are less adept at looking for bias in publications like USA Today. This thorough comparison of different types of sources, I found, helps students recognize the ways in which news that professes neutrality is often quite biased or slanted.

Student participation in this blogging assignment can also help create a classroom multitude: a simultaneously close knit yet de-centered community that preserves and values difference. Having taught this assignment both as a traditional journaling exercise, and as a blogging assignment, I believe that the News Blogs can inspire more student discussion, and allow for the expression of a wider range of opinions. Through commenting on each other's posts students can develop an online rapport that not possible in face-to-face discussions held over traditional "news journals." The ability, provided by blogs, for everyone in the class to read the news stories posted by students as well as student comments on those stories can create a common basis for discussion and political debate. Further, students may be more willing, in an online environment, to state and argue for unpopular opinions on current news stories and issues.

Conclusion

Despite a few example of exceptions in the classroom and beyond, one can clearly see that the World Wide Web is not a utopian space for democracy and free information. In many cases, the Web intensifies the spectacle, contributing to the growth and development of the contemporary mode of production and culture based primarily on the reproduction and exchange of images. It also can work to further intensify the alienation felt so strongly throughout contemporary society: individuals spend their leisure time at separate computer screens actively developing the spectacle, and the possibility for collective resistance becomes ever dimmer. But as Debord makes clear, the spectacle is not totalizing; and—as seen in this chapter and the last—the Web, because it is an emergent network, can also never be totalized. The weblog has the potential to greatly increase the number of voices to be heard on topics large and small, grave and trivial. While the blog has provided a means for individuals to voluntarily provide "free labor" that contributes to the growth and power of the spectacle, it has also provided the means for individuals and organizations to challenge the hegemony of the corporate, top-down media. And although blogs have perhaps increased the alienation of many by offering the means for engagement in individualistic performance, they may also help to foster connection and empower the multitude, by allowing wider access to the public sphere and offering a virtual space in which rhizomatic communities can grow.

Chapter Five:

Global Culture, Global Campus

In this concluding chapter, I will, much like Berlin (1996) in *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*, attempt to apply my mostly theoretical development of "network epistemic rhetoric" to the classroom. I will argue that a cultural studies approach to composition instruction advocated by Berlin and others has become increasingly important in the emerging network society, but I will emphasize that such an approach *must* be explicitly grounded in a student-centered approach to learning. A cultural studies approach to composition is necessary for students growing and learning in our network society because it allows for the critique and production of multi-modal and multi-genre texts while maintaining a focus on the forces of subjectivity, ideology, and power that have become especially dynamic in the current historical moment.

The pedagogical model outlined by Berlin (1996) is one of the most prominent models of cultural studies oriented composition and focuses on teaching students to become aware of and critique cultural codes. Over time, of course, the use of cultural studies in the composition classroom has been critiqued by a number of scholars in the field.[37] I will briefly examine a critique of cultural studies in the composition classroom which is particularly salient in our hyper-mediated world: the critique of cultural studies from a psychoanalytic perspective,

[37] Nedra Reynolds in "Interrupting Our Way to Agency" argues that both the original theorists of cultural studies, such as Hall, as well as those who advocate its use in the composition classroom, do not give adequate attention to issues of gender, and in fact ignore the contributions of women to cultural studies. From another perspective, Susan Miller criticizes cultural studies for placing too much emphasis on reading and analyzing texts, and not enough emphasis on the production of texts (207-210).

which has been leveled most vehemently by Victor Vitanza (1991) and most elaborately by Marshall Alcorn (2002). Both Vitanza and Alcorn argue that cultural studies is ineffectual in the composition classroom because theorists who advocate such an approach assume the existence of an autonomous free subject in the classroom that is contradicted by these theorists own postmodern theorization of the subject. Further, they both argue that advocates of cultural studies ignore the role played by irrational desire or emotional attachment in the subject's identification with ideology. Thus, they argue, purely rational critique of ways that dominant ideologies determine the framework with which we view the world will never result in a changed subject who will be motivated to take part in social action. One of the chief targets of criticism from both Vitanza and Alcorn is Berlin's social epistemic rhetoric, as both a theoretical and pedagogical model. They both argue, basically, that Berlin assumes the rational critique of cultural texts will transform the student subject—that if students are simply exposed to the ways that discourse normalizes the current, oppressive system of power, then they will become active agents of resistance to that hegemonic order. I will consider this critique in greater detail and note that, while it is flawed because of its misreading of Berlin, it is nonetheless relevant to the challenge of teaching rhetoric and composition in a network culture in which, as Terranova (2004) argues, persuasion is largely accomplished through spectacle and affect rather than reasoned argument. I will then argue that critical pedagogy offers the means to effectively address the role of emotion in ideological critique and that, if we wish to transform the student subject in our emerging network society, such an

approach should be combined with a cultural studies pedagogy that maintains a commitment to critical technological literacy. Additionally, I will provide a detailed narrative account of my own cultural studies course focused on globalization as an example of a pedagogy that maintains a student-centered approach to learning and a strong focus on technology. I will conclude with a summary of the major conclusions that I have reached over the course of developing this project. And so, in this final chapter, I will consider some of the challenges the field faces as we try to create a network epistemic rhetoric that not only addresses the theoretical questions of the day, but can also be successfully brought to bear in the classroom.

Models of Cultural Studies in Composition

Beyond being defined as the interdisciplinary study of culture—described not as high art, but, as Raymond Williams (1983) argues, "a whole way of life" that must be studied in relation to material production—cultural studies has been for some time the basis for various strains of pedagogy in the field of composition and rhetoric (6). In the late eighties, scholars in the field, influenced by the work of cultural studies theorists such as Williams and Stuart Hall and postmodern theory more generally, began to advocate the application of the theories of cultural studies to the composition classroom. It is important to note that these scholars were not only influenced by cultural studies theorists but also by theorists of critical pedagogy, such as Paulo Freire, Myles Horton and Ira Shor. Joe Marshall Hardin (2001) notes that Freire was the primary influence on a number

of central figures in the application of cultural studies to composition (p. 45).[38] Theorists such as Lester Faigley, Henry Giroux, and, of course, Berlin, used cultural studies to examine the ways in which the composition classroom serves to reproduce dominant economic and cultural ideologies and the ways in which the composition classroom might become a site of resistance.

Before continuing I must first address the question of what definition of cultural studies this chapter will be using. Hardin (2001) establishes three major models of reproduction upon which cultural studies pedagogies are based: the "economic-reproduction model," the "cultural-reproduction model" and the "hegemonic-state model." The economic-reproduction model is based largely on the work of Althusser (1971) who argues that Ideological State Apparatuses such as the institutional structures of the school, church, and family reproduce the relations of production of the dominant economic ideology—capitalism (p. 1489). The cultural-reproduction model is based on the work of Bourdieu and argues that the school, along with other cultural institutions, reproduces hierarchical class structure by promoting the tastes of the elite as the cultural norm (Hardin, 2001, p. 41). The hegemonic-state reproduction model is derived from the work of Gramsci, whereby the consent of the oppressed is obtained through discursive and institutional practices that identify the values of the elite with those of the lower classes (Hardin, 2001, p. 41).

This chapter will operate upon the basis of a cultural studies pedagogy that relies on the first model of economic-reproduction. Berlin—and Alcorn who

[38] It can be plausibly argued in fact that many of those who advocated the pedagogical use of cultural studies were attempting to find a way to bring the theories of Freire, whose work is focused on the education of the South American poor, to North American universities.

makes Berlin a central target of his critique of cultural studies and composition—proceed from Althusser's understanding of ideology as the "'conceptual framework' through which humans have agreed to interpret and make meaning of their experiences" (Alcorn, 2002, 40). Generally, therefore, cultural studies pedagogy seeks to enable students to examine and critique cultural texts in order to understand the ways in which the dominant ideology serves to structure their understanding of experience and their own selves, thereby learning that texts reflect ideological and cultural conflicts and are the sites of such conflicts (Faigley, 1992, 72). The goal of this critique is the conscious understanding of the process by which one is subjected to dominant powers and the eventual active resistance to that subjugation. Ideological critique is accomplished through the examination and analysis of cultural codes that serve to privilege and reproduce the dominant ideology.

The Psychoanalytic Critique of Cultural Studies

Vitanza (1991) states that, while there is no third group of theorists in composition, there might exist a "molecular agglomerate" that forms a fifth column in opposition to both of (what he considers to be) the two major schools of thought in the field: a group that is comprised of cognitivists, expressivists, and current-traditionalists on the one hand, and those who favor social-epistemic rhetoric on the other, or, as he also labels the two groups, the foundationalists and the anti-foundationalists (p. 142). Thus, Vitanza's critique of social-epistemic is also a critique of cultural studies in composition. He fully rejects the foundationalists, agreeing with the critique forwarded by advocates of social

epistemic rhetoric: that the foundationalist approach perpetuates a pedagogy based on capitalism and consumerism and that such is an inappropriate base upon which to construct composition pedagogy. However, while he agrees with the aims of social-epistemic rhetoric—that is, to create a rhetoric and pedagogy that does not operate on the assumption that the current mode of production is good and normal (as a pedagogy based on this assumption leads to the perpetuation of that assumption in the student)—he believes that it, too, is flawed. Vitanza claims that the proponents of social-epistemic rhetoric are not "suspicious enough" as they continue to place faith in rational thought, and hold onto Enlightenment myths of liberation. Vitanza cites Lyotard (1984), arguing that the supporters of social-epistemic rhetoric fail to recognize that, as Lyotard writes, "reason and power are one and the same thing" (Lyotard qtd by Vitanza, 1991,142). Reason is inherently oppressive as it cuts off and forecloses any acknowledgement of the role played by desire, and therefore any emancipatory pedagogy based on it is doomed to fail.

Vitanza offers Berlin and Henry Giroux as examples of two anti-foundationalists who have a strong penchant for rationalism. He writes, "Both speak of the contradictions in society and the curriculum, which must be laid bare so that students can 'resist'" (p. 142). In both cases, students gain awareness of these contradictions through rational critique. This, of course, is problematic because, as Vitanza correctly notes, Berlin and Giroux are anti-foundationalists and base their pedagogical theories on poststructuralist epistemology: it is discourse that constructs the subject (who is unstable, fragmented and comprised

of numerous subject positions), as well social and material conditions (Giroux 1992, Berlin 1996). The subject is therefore not a reasonable being of the Enlightenment, who is in complete control of either his/her language or actions. In other words, the rational understanding of a contradiction in society doesn't necessarily translate to the desire for active resistance.

This critique is particularly salient in a society in which discourse is overwhelmingly spectacular and persuasion is most often accomplished with affect, or *pathos,* rather than reason. Terranova's (2004) work on network culture, like Vitanza's and Alcorn's, forces us to reconsider one of the most dearly held beliefs in the field of composition and rhetoric—that rational discourse is the key to a civil, just society, and essential to political change. Terranova's assertion that (rational) meaning is subordinated to affect in informational cultures problematizes this assumption. If information is defined as that which stands out from noise, only that which is simple, easily identifiable, and replicable will get through to a wide range and number of people in a network culture overloaded with electronic noise. Rational, logical argument is often far too complicated to get through all the noise—feelings however, are a different story. In the digital age, whether in the context of a classroom or the arena of national politics, it may be far easier to convince a group of people to feel a certain way, than to persuade them all to agree to with a specific argument.

The use of pathetic appeals to persuade individuals or "the masses" to believe or act a certain way has been the concern of rhetoricians since classical

times.[39] Emotional appeals can indeed be dangerous, as they are often used by the powerful to override or obscure that which is rationally in the best interest of the people. Thomas Frank (2003), for example, argues that the success of the Republican Party in recent years has been largely due to their campaigning on emotional (and religious) issues such as abortion and gay marriage, which lead uneducated and poor citizens to ignore the economic policies of the Party and vote against their own economic interests. The emotional issue trumps the economic policy that requires rational understanding. The powerful have used similar rhetorical tactics throughout the course of history.

The question becomes: what makes the current historical moment any different? I believe that it isn't a difference in kind, but of degree. Just as Jameson (1991) argues that the postmodern period is an acceleration and intensification of the conditions of the modern period, the current historical moment from which the network society is emerging can be viewed as an intensification of the postmodern culture and economy. As such, the commodification of culture is accelerated (as independent or subcultural art is recouped by the corporation as quickly as it appears), while forms of mediation are multiplied and spread throughout all aspects of experience. Electronic noise saturates experience, and drowns out meaning—rational expression and understanding— on a scale never seen before. A space apart from this noise, or from commodified culture which perpetuates hegemony, becomes less and less a possibility. Thus, the subject or

[39] See Aristotle's (1991) *On Rhetoric.*

group is shaped and controlled by affective rhetorics that encompass nearly all experience.

As Terranova writes, political success in the network culture "boils down to…the capacity to synthesize not so much a common position (from which to win the masses over) but a *common passion* giving rise to a distributed movement able to displace the limits and terms within which the political constitution of the future is played out" (p. 156, emphasis mine). This assertion certainly complicates cultural studies-oriented composition pedagogy which depends on what Braun might call the "democratic hope" that students will critique rationally and respond with some kind of consensus-based action to texts that perpetuate hegemonic cultural values. Terranova's work also lends support to the critiques of Vitanza and Alcorn, and makes clear that any kind of cultural studies pedagogy cannot rely upon the assumption that rational understanding alone can transform human subjectivity and promote social change. Her insights point to the great need for research into as well as theoretical and pedagogical responses to the shift towards affect in the persuasive discourse of the network culture, and the importance of addressing the role of emotion in the classroom. In other words, we must enable students to critique and produce affect-driven arguments, but in order to persuade them that such critical and creative work is important, we must engage them emotionally in the classroom.

Despite the psychoanalytic critique, I argue that the cultural studies pedagogy of Berlin *is* still essential to the education of our students in composition and rhetoric in the digital age. For one thing, the critiques of Vitanza

and Alcorn are flawed by their assumption that the pedagogy described by Berlin will be carried out in a traditional, teacher-centered classroom. If this were the case, then indeed, Berlin would be relying on the rational understanding of injustice to motivate a transformation of the student subject. Indeed, there are times when Berlin does seem to assume a rational student subject. However, it is clear from a closer reading of his work that he intended his classroom to be a site of critical pedagogy and "affective learning," in which students were transformed not just by rational awareness, but by emotional engagement in the process of learning. The pedagogy of network epistemic rhetoric must make this commitment to critical pedagogy, and therefore the importance of *both* the rational and affective engagement of the student subject, more explicit. But cultural studies still must play a central role in this pedagogy, as it opens the possibility for the humanities, and particularly those engaged in the study of rhetoric (whether student or teacher), to move beyond the critique and production of traditional, print texts; it opens the way for us to engage with and create a wide range of multi-modal texts: digital, visual and audio. Much as cultural studies pushed traditional English studies beyond a narrow focus on a canon of texts deemed worthy examples of literary art, cultural studies can provide a theoretical framework for rhetorical studies to engage with a range of multi-modal artifacts.

What is needed is a cultural studies pedagogy, informed by critical pedagogy's focus on emotion and holistic learning, that maintains a focus on critical technological literacy and teaches students to both critique and produce arguments based on affect. This pedagogy should not only affectively engage

students, it should enable them to understand how they are persuaded by appeals to pathos, and employ those appeals themselves—in both print and digital genres.

A Dialogic Option: Critical Pedagogy and Affective Learning

In Vitanza's and Alcorn's descriptions of cultural studies pedagogy, both seem to assume that such courses will follow a traditional, teacher-centered approach to pedagogy. Vitanza makes no mention of the influence of critical pedagogy on the development of social epistemic rhetoric. And Alcorn, for example, writes, "[C]ultural studies often assumes that if we teach politically correct knowledge, we can generate politically correct practice and make political decisions to help those that suffer" (p. 5). Alcorn writes of cultural studies pedagogy as though it operates under the assumption that students can be changed, and thereby be motivated to change the world, if they are simply given the correct knowledge. Further, he writes, "Cultural studies most often addresses desire as if it were something that can be mobilized and corrected by the sheer demand of knowledge and/or authority" (p. 5). Alcorn's description points to an element that lacks emphasis in many descriptions of cultural studies pedagogy: the connection between dialogue and affect.

While Berlin does discuss the central importance of active classroom debate to cultural studies pedagogy, he perhaps fails to note explicitly enough the affect of such interaction on the emotion of students, and, as I will discuss below in relation to critical pedagogy, it is the positive emotion that this kind of decentered classroom, focused on mutual critical inquiry, can create that opens the student to transformation (Giroux 1992, Berlin "Poststructuralism" 1992).

Berlin does note that Ira Shor, probably the leading American theorist of critical pedagogy, provides the best and most comprehensive model of a social epistemic pedagogy. His own model curriculum, in *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* (1996), however, does not place great emphasis on the use of the student-centered strategies of critical pedagogy. In order to be effective in the emerging network culture however, the pedagogy of social epistemic rhetoric must engage explicitly with the role of affect in persuasion—both in the classroom and in public discourse. That is, if a teacher wishes to persuade his/her students that it is important to critically engage with cultural and political texts, those students must be emotionally engaged in the classroom. And further, in order to critique rhetorical texts in the network society, students must be able to understand how affect is used as the primary persuasive device in this historical moment. Such a pedagogy would respond to critiques of Vitanza and Alcorn, as well as prepare students to confront and create persuasive texts in the network society.

Alcorn fails to acknowledge that Berlin's cultural studies pedagogy does in fact recognize the importance of student-centered learning. (Although it is true that Berlin may not have emphasized this enough.) The cultural studies pedagogy that Alcorn describes above appears to operate on what Freire (1970) calls the banking model of learning (which I will address below shortly). In the classroom Alcorn describes above, the teacher has the politically correct knowledge (about, for example, the ways that certain ideologies oppress and construct people) and he or she gives it to, or deposits it in the student. Knowledge, in this case, is an objective substance that can be transferred from one mind to another. Alcorn

makes clear that he believes that cultural studies pedagogy necessarily operates on such a model of education when he contrasts cultural studies with the work of mourning, describing such work as "not the kind of information that we can memorize and employ" (p. 29). Alcorn argues that a student will not be motivated to change him/herself simply because they were provided with the "correct" information or knowledge. I'm fairly sure that any practitioner of cultural studies who employs critical pedagogy would whole-heartedly agree!

As noted above, many practitioners of cultural studies in the composition classroom were largely influenced by Paulo Freire (1970), whose work is focused chiefly on developing a response to the inadequacies of the banking model of education (p. 45). Freire is generally acknowledged as the preeminent source of "critical pedagogy," which takes as it purpose the liberation of the individual from oppression of the dominant class. It accomplishes this objective through the decentering of the classroom and the empowerment of the student (1970, p. 75). Further, Freire, like the cultural studies pedagogies he inspired, advocated the critique of cultural codes to enable students to overcome subjugation to dominant ideologies (pp. 104-106). He argues that this can never be accomplished by following the banking model of education by which knowledge is considered a static, objective substance that must be deposited in the bank of the student's mind, memorized and then applied (p. 72). Instead, teacher and students must construct knowledge dialogically: students participate actively in all learning, taking part in not only critical inquiry, but also the construction of the curriculum itself (pp. 75, 80). Students gain critical awareness not, as Alcorn suggests of

cultural studies pedagogy, because they are give politically correct knowledge or coerced into belief by the authority of the teacher, but through what Friere (1970) calls problem-posing: the process of mutual inquiry. The student subject is not changed, as Alcorn believes cultural studies attempts, by replacing one ideology with another, but through inquiry that leads the student to become critically aware of the ideological forces that shape him or her. Thus, the question, raised by members of the field as well as various right-wing figures, of whether the classroom is the appropriate place for ideological critique becomes moot, for in the context of critical pedagogy such critique is not a matter of changing the student so that he or she agrees with the teacher, but enabling the student to become critically aware of the impact of various ideological discourses on his or her life.[40] Further, only a classroom that is non-hierarchical, decentered, can truly enable students to gain what Freire calls critical consciousness, as the school is one the foremost ideological state apparatuses: it reproduces and normalizes the hierarchical structure of capitalist ideology, and makes it all the more difficult for the student to perceive the formative power of that ideology. In order to raise consciousness, the practices of the institution must be changed.

Ira Shor (1992), an advocate of critical pedagogical theory and practice, addresses the role of affect in the classroom more specifically than Freire, linking the practice of mutual inquiry to the successful engagement of student emotion. Shor argues that the participation of students and the de-centering of the

[40] This question has been raised by Elizabeth Ellsworth in "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering" as well as by figures such as David Horowitz in his attacks on the academic left.

classroom are essential to engaging both the intellect and emotion of the student. Shor writes:

> The difference between empowering and traditional pedagogy has to do with the positive and negative feelings students can develop for the learning process. In traditional classrooms, negative emotions are provoked in students by teacher-centered politics. Unilateral teacher authority in a passive curriculum arouses in many students a variety of negative emotions (p. 23).

Shor makes clear that a tradition authoritative pedagogy will indeed fail to encourage students to gain critical awareness; in fact, he argues that this is because such pedagogies provoke negative emotions in students, causing them, when a teacher-centered course focuses on politics, to hold all the more dearly to their own political attachments.

For the critique of ideology in the composition classroom to lead to the consciousness-raising of the student, for it to change the subject, the class must be participatory, dialogic and decentered. For Shor argues that it is only in such classrooms that learning can affect the students. He writes, "[A]n empowering educator seeks a positive relationship between feeling and thought. He or she begins this search by offering a participatory curriculum. In a participatory class where authority is mutual, some of the positive affects that support student learning include cooperativeness…attentiveness, openness, and concern about society" (p. 24). This is not to say that all is sunshine and roses in such a classroom-- Shor acknowledges that the participatory classroom can lead to resistance and conflict (p. 24). But when authority is shared in a cooperative classroom, Shor makes it clear that students are more likely to be open to change, making it possible that in the process of ideological critique they will attach

positive feelings to the new critical awareness they are gaining. Shor illustrates the fact that students in a decentered classroom can successfully deal with the emotionally charged ideological critique, giving an example of his own version of cultural studies that combines his cooperative approach to learning with critical inquiry into the ideological codes normalized by the news media (p. 28).

I will now turn to my own example of a cultural studies curriculum for the composition classroom that is strongly influenced by Shor's approach in that it combines a student-centered approach intended to engage students intellectually and emotionally, with a focus on the critique and production of cultural discourse. The curriculum moves beyond Shor's and Berlin's in that it also includes an emphasis on digital texts and that it specifically encourages students to critique, as well as employ, affect as a rhetorical strategy in electronic texts.

Global Culture, Global Campus

This chapter will now focus on the objectives, strategies, and curriculum of a first-year writing course that addresses issues of corporate and global[41] cultures within and surrounding the university. The curriculum, which was originally developed in collaboration with two other instructors, and has been

[41] Little has been yet written on globalization in the field of composition and rhetoric. Several books and articles touch on the issue of globalization, but few deal with its use as a topic in the composition classroom. Most of the work done in the field on globalization has been thus far focused on technology. *Global Literacies and the World Wide Web* is a useful edited collection of essays on digital literacy from a range of international perspectives. In "The Political Economy of Computers and Composition: 'Democracy Hope' in the Era of Globalization," cited in previous chapters, M.J. Braun argues for increased attention in computers and composition to the central role played by multinational capital in any kind technological literacy education. Hawisher and Selfe, in "Globalization and Agency: Designing and Redesigning the Literacies of Cyberspace," discuss agency on the Web in our globalizing world. However, June Johnson's *Global Issues, Local Arguments* is one of the few works in the field that moves the issue of globalization beyond discussions of technology, and into the composition classroom. Though a textbook/ reader, the book is a useful resource for scholars and teachers interested in addressing globalization in either research or in the classroom.

taught several times by several instructors, has received an overwhelmingly positive response from students and instructors. What I present here has been heavily revised and refined (chiefly to add a much greater emphasis on technology) since its original development. I present it as an example of the pedagogy of network epistemic rhetoric, as it attempts to apply, in the classroom, the various theoretical conclusions reached over the course of this book. Further, the pedagogical suggestions made in earlier chapters (regarding social networking sites and blogs) can be incorporated into the overall course plan. The curriculum draws on the cultural studies pedagogy of Berlin as well as Friere's critical pedagogy, but it also maintains a strong emphasis on digital and visual rhetoric. Students are encouraged to follow Berlin's model of textual critique, and to focus on analysis of digital texts. However, its emphasis on technology as a topic as well as its focus on the critique and production of digital texts does not proceed from Berlin's assumption that technology itself is inherently democratic—in fact, students are specifically encouraged to consider the role played by capital in IT. Technology is still used in the classroom to encourage community—though not a community based on consensus: applications such as blogs are used to decenter the classroom and encourage the students to work together as a multitude.

In order to respond to the critiques of Vitanza and Alcorn and engage students both intellectually and *emotionally,* the course situates academic writing within a global, "real-world," local context: students examine the global impacts of their *own* roles as consumers of/in the university. Moving outward from their experiences in this subject position, students examine a variety of global issues,

such as the impacts of American consumer culture on global cultures, and the increasing corporate influence on the academic and intellectual culture of the university. Throughout the semester, students work collaboratively to research and analyze their own university's resources, policies, and contracts with corporations and foreign governments in order to develop an advanced understanding of the place of the university within the global community. I have found that the course's strong focus on the individual personal experience of the student as a member of a college community (connected to the global economy) encourages a strong emotional engagement from the student: the average student may not be interested in the abstract issue of, say, the corporatization of higher education, but many students *do* care that prices are high at their college bookstore because it is run by Barnes and Noble, or that they can only buy Coke (or Pepsi) products on campus because their university has signed an exclusive contract with the corporation. Also, in order to create what Ira Shor calls an "affective learning" environment, I further encourage the development of classroom community based the model of multitude through means other than technology, decentralizing power in the classroom by sharing curricular decisions and organizational responsibilities with students. Further, emotional investment in the course is encouraged through class-wide involvement in a student-organized public conference at which student work is exhibited.

Finally, the course topic of globalization, in part because it is inherently tied to technological issues, allows much opportunity for students to engage with technology as a topic; the course design itself also require students to critique and

create multi-modal affect-driven rhetorics. In preparation for their final essays and the conference, students evaluate websites (among texts from other electronic sources, such as library databases), digitally produce posters and fliers, and create a range of other digital texts, from short films to PowerPoint presentations.

Course Overview

Each unit of the course is based on the exploration of argumentative strategies and research techniques. Units of the curriculum include "Globalization and You," in which students write causal arguments that examine the effects of increased corporate power on American culture, economy and/ or themselves individually. Students can also write causal arguments that examine the effects that individual consumers can have on the corporation. Further, students can also examine the effect of U.S. corporate culture on a specific traditional culture, or vice-versa.[42] In "Advertising, the News and the Multinational Media" students examine the increasing convergence of global media corporations and critically analyze the effects of corporate media (both new and traditional) on American culture. For this unit students have, for example, examined the corporate purchase of social networking sites such as MySpace and performed rhetorical analyses of the ways that consumer culture within the university is encouraged by representations of college life in entertainment and advertising. In the unit "The Global Campus," students write ethical or evaluative arguments based on their research into connections between their university and the global economy. At the end of the semester, students organize and host an academic conference where the

[42] This unit opens with a viewing of *Life and Debt* a documentary about the effects of the global economy on the culture of Jamaica.

visual, digital, and written arguments developed over the course of the semester are presented to the university community. At the conference, students also present papers and participate in question and answer sessions. Thus, as I explore in greater detail below, the course follows Paulo Freire's insistence on starting from the student's own experience, draws upon James Berlin's model of cultural critique, and reflects the importance, noted by Joe Marshall Hardin, of validating student texts and providing a means for those texts to enter public discourse.

This course, in my experience, opens up lines of communication between students of varying ideological backgrounds and engages them in a discussion of their relationship to the larger global culture surrounding them. Further, students are energized by the "real-world" aspects of the topics and often report that the course changes the way they think about writing, arguing, and even shopping!

Strategies and Objectives

The following assignments, which I will examine in detail, reflect my commitment to critical pedagogy, as well as a cultural studies approach to composition. I feel that critical pedagogy has the power to transform student writing because it requires students to identify topics, skills, and structures that they want to highlight and/or improve upon in their work. Every time I teach the course, each unit's specific major assignments are created in conjunction with my classes; together, students and teacher identified critical inquiry questions and created a rubric for assessment. Student-centered pedagogy is central to this course and the assignment sequence emphasizes student experience throughout. The first unit, "Defining Globalization," asks students to first consider what they

already know about globalization, and then formulate critical inquiry questions about what they would like to learn about it. The students then read a number of popular and scholarly articles that examine the characteristics of globalization. The major writing assignment for the unit asks students to create a definitional argument in which they attempt to persuade readers what exactly globalization is, or isn't. The second unit, "Globalization and You," starts from their individual experience as consumers and asks them to relate that experience to the global community. For this unit's major writing assignment, students create a causal argument that examines the effect of the global economy, or a specific corporation (many students write about Wal-Mart, for example), on the individual consumer and/ or local culture. For the third unit, "Advertising, the News, and the Multinational Media" students examine the multi-modal spaces with which they are most familiar, as they consider film and video texts, and critique the online social networks to which they belong. Further, they examine the trend towards multinational media consolidation and critique news articles and programs. For the major writing assignment, students choose from a range of possible argumentative strategies and compose essays that examine issues and texts related to technology and the media: students have written on topics ranging from media consolidation to on-line file sharing. The final unit, "The Global Campus," is a culmination of the course. Students research their *own* university's relationship to a multinational corporation, or global business trend, thereby connecting there personal experience as a college student to the global economy and culture. I will now present a detailed overview of two of the course's units: the two units that I

feel best exemplify the pedagogy of network epistemic rhetoric, in that they both reflect a commitment to critical technological literacy, critical pedagogy and cultural studies.

Advertising, the News and the Multinational New Media

This unit focuses on global media and technology. Students engage with a variety of issues, and perform a wide range of tasks for this unit:

- Students examine digital representations of college, and consider the ways in which college is marketed as product and they are constructed as consumers by college advertising.
- Students learn about multinational corporate media consolidation, and create "News Blogs" in which they compile and critique news stories about globalization.
- Students analyze and compose arguments about the digital spaces where they are most active, such as blogs, social networking sites (like Facebook and MySpace), or even online forums devoted to popular entertainment.

The Web offers instant access to an astounding range of cultural artifacts and discourse environments that can be used as material for the critique of cultural codes. Students use the Web to find and decode electronic discourse that constructs the college experience as an economic transaction in which they are the consumers. These electronic discourses, students find, range from college homepages with slogans like "Affordable Success" to a university athletics site with an online Nike apparel store.

Students also critique university websites that construct college in terms of race, gender, and socio-economic status. The students specifically note homepages that featured brilliant images of gothic architecture, exquisitely manicured lawns, and fashionably dressed students, right beside information on

the university's ranking in US News and World Report and the number of attending merit scholars. A campus bookstore is another rich subject for critique. Students therein examine the online services of the corporation running the bookstore, services that streamline the buying process, discourage bargain-hunting, and offer product suggestions. From examining this wide range of discursive examples, students learn how electronic discourse is shaping their roles as consumers within the university.

By examining representations of college in the new media, and analyzing their role as a member of a college campus in relation to such representations, students can become more aware of the ways that they are shaped by the media and advertising. Students can then move from analyzing the media from their personal perspective as a college student, to an examination of the current state of the global corporate media. Students read articles arguing for and against media consolidation, and consult a special issue on the media from *The Nation,* which contains a chart detailing the holdings of, and relationships between, the five major media corporations. They then create "News Blogs," mentioned in Chapter Four, in which they link to and critique news stories focused on globalization. Their blogs aim not simply to discuss the issues brought up by the articles, but to critique the news article itself. Students ask: Is the article biased? Is it well-researched and in-depth? Does it contribute to the reader's critical understanding of the issue at hand? Students are required to respond to their classmates' blogs, creating networked, rhizomatic discussion. As noted in the previous chapter, these blogs serve to decentralize the classroom conversation, providing a means for

student dialogue that does not cohere around a central point of view (such as the teacher's).

The Global Campus

This is the most important unit of the course. In many ways it is the culmination of the work the students have done up to this point; the two previous units can be viewed as preparation for this unit. The unit's learning objectives are as follows:

- Students will be able to conduct extensive research on a business practice of their university that is in some way connected to the global economy. Student will be able to use effectively a variety of research methods: using library resources, performing interviews, creating surveys, etc. This research should be conducted in groups and individually.
- Students will produce in groups and present visual and written arguments at an on-campus conference on globalization.
- Students will organize this conference themselves.

As with the previous units, this unit encourages students to work from their own experience and connect that experience to the global community. Personal experience and local knowledge are even more important in this unit. I have found that this unit is particularly successful because it meets students where they are and enables them to examine and offer opinions on the world with which they are most familiar: the university campus. The unit encourages students to examine their role as members and consumers in the local college community, and relate that experience to the global economy and culture. Further, the on-campus conference enables students to share all of their hard work with others. The conference validates student-created texts, as it demonstrates to everyone

involved that students can, and should, have a voice in the community, and that students have the ability to make a valuable contribution to the discourse of the university.

The unit has three major assignments:

- An argumentative research essay that evaluates a business relationship held by their university with a multinational corporation or a business practice in which their university is engaged that is in some way connected to the global economy. Students can choose to argue whether this relationship or practice is ethical, or whether it is "good" for the students/ university.

- A visual argument, created in groups, to be presented at the globalization conference. This argument can be a traditional poster, or a multi-media project.

- An advocacy flier, created by each individual student. This flier should ideally be created with digital technology, and should focus on some aspect of globalization. The flier should be focus on a "proposal argument," and be passed out at the conference.

Again, as in the previous units, students are asked to compose argumentative essays; in this case, they create either an evaluative or ethical argument. In both cases, students establish criteria for what they believe constitutes a beneficial or ethical business relationship or practice and then apply those criteria to a business relationship or practice held by their university. However, this unit departs from those that came before in the amount of research required. Students are asked to consult a range of resources and also engage in hands-on research practices for both their individual essays as well as their group visual project. For the group project, students are placed in research groups and asked to focus on a particular college service or business practice, such as the bookstore, foodservices, sports,

and fundraising. Students consult scholarly articles for background on issues such as outsourcing by colleges, the corporatization of the university, and anti-sweatshop activism on college campuses. They consult databases available through the college library, such as Hoovers, for information on corporations affiliated with their university. Students also engage with various related websites, from corporate watchdog sites to sites devoted to advocating either free trade or fair trade. Blogs are again a useful digital genre in this unit. Student research groups can be required, or given the option, to create research blogs. Research blogs can be used as an online space in which to post links to resources; in this way individual students can share with their group, and comment on, the research material they have found.

Students can also engage a range of more hands-on research techniques. Students have interviewed managers at the campus bookstore regarding its contract with Barnes and Noble, as well as a number of university employees to gain information on contracts the college holds with companies such as Nike and Coca-Cola. They have interviewed workers at the bookstore and foodservices in regards to their treatment by the companies to which those services have been outsourced. Students have even conducted surveys on beverage preferences on campus to inform their research on the college's exclusive contract with Coke.

I have found that students create excellent written and visual arguments on a variety of issues important to them and their college community as a whole. Students have created written and visual arguments on their university's contracts with Nike, Barnes and Noble, Starbucks, and Sysco, to name a few. A range of

topics and political perspectives are always present each time the course has been taught. One student wrote a paper criticizing the university president's relationship to the oil industry, and then contributed to a visual argument that, for the most part, supported that relationship. Students have created scathing written and visual arguments criticizing the university's involvement with companies such as Nike and Coke, while other students have written well-supported arguments in favor of those business relationships. Students have also engaged with a variety of digital technologies, creating argumentative websites, digitally produced advocacy fliers and posters, and using video to create an anti-Nike commercial, as well as an investigative report on the campus bookstore. One group of students even made anti-Nike T-shirts!

The course's emphasis on digital and visual affect-driven rhetorics has indeed been in strong evidence at each Globalization Conference that has resulted from this course. Both the group produced posters and the individually-created advocacy fliers have demonstrated student engagement with and production of pathos-laden electronic discourse. A number of students hit upon a particularly affective strategy for visual and digital argumentation: *detournement*, the subversive process of the re-signification of dominant cultural codes.[43] The images and texts of corporate advertising are turned against themselves or *detourned* in order to make a statement of resistance. Many of the students have used digital technology to find and re-signfy corporate images—for example brand logos, sponsored athletes, and celebrity spokespeople—by altering them or

[43] See Debord, 1967.

placing them in contexts that undermine the corporate message. One group of students created a poster that juxtaposed images of Nike athletes and Nike products with images of sweatshop factories and workers to argue that the university's contract with Nike is unethical. (The web provides access, incidentally, to images of sweatshops that would have been difficult to attain otherwise.) One student found an already re-signified, anti-corporate, Starbucks logo on the web and combined it with an image of impoverished coffee bean farmers, for an advocacy flyer that argues Starbuck's fair-trade campaign does not help the majority of the corporation's coffee suppliers. In these examples, digital technology offers material for cultural critique as well as the opportunity to manipulate and combine images and texts to re-signify the codes of the dominant culture.

The Web offers students (and of course, other citizens) the means to engage in signifying practices that run counter to the hegemonic culture, so some students may produce texts and subjectivities that re-signify or resist dominant cultural codes. Many examples of subversive signifying practices exist on the Web, from the "culture jamming" of *Adbusters*, to the more direct use of online networks to organize political action as seen, for example, in online forums dedicated to the organization of labor. Clearly, digital technology can help students and citizens realize the democratic goals of social epistemic rhetoric.

Conclusions

Although the various instructors who have taught this curriculum have gained a number of insights, I have drawn two major conclusions from the

experience of teaching this course. First, I have found that globalization is an ideal topic for those who wish to engage their composition students with issues of culture and politics. We obliviously live in a particularly polarized historical moment in which questions regarding American culture and politics are most often framed as binary, clear-cut choices: Blue state or red state? Pro-life or pro-choice? Gay rights or family values? Military strength or the triumph of terror? Are you with us or against us? The topic of globalization has a way of transcending these hot button, two-dimensional issues. To begin with, students are often relatively unfamiliar with the issues surrounding globalization and are therefore less likely to begin the course with preconceived notions as to the "correct" position in regards to a given issue. If one begins a class discussion on the question of abortion, obviously, everyone in the room knows already where he or she stands, and is extremely unlikely to diverge even slightly from that position. A class discussion on the merits of, say, free-trade, or even sweatshops, isn't anywhere near so clear-cut. In my experience, students generally identify as either a Republican or Democrat (usually based on their parent's identification) and their political opinions generally follow their party's line. The issues surrounding globalization cannot so easily be placed into one of two possible world-views. Having taught this course at a very "red" state university, I found that students often came to conclusions that were in opposition to their professed "conservative" viewpoint. For example, students who explicitly identified with the pro-business policies of the Republican Party, after research, came out strongly against the mega-retailer Wal-Mart. Some came to criticize Wal-Mart

after studying the effects it has had on the economy and culture of small rural towns (from which many of the students came), others became critical of Wal-Mart after learning the central role it has played in the decline of American manufacturing. This is but one example: students engaged in surprising ways with a number of issues, creating anti-sweatshop fliers, arguing against media conglomeration, and even criticizing the free-trade policies of the U.S. If this curriculum was taught in a "bluer" state I have no doubt that students there would also come to unexpected conclusions regarding the politics and culture of globalization.

Second, I found that the Globalization Conference was successful in many regards. Most importantly, the students did great work. It was clear that the public nature of the conference motivated students to create quality work. The chance to display their own personal work publicly indeed led to a level of commitment as well as intellectual and emotional investment from students I have rarely observed in a composition classroom. Many groups, and individual students, went above and beyond the requirements, taking extra time to produce digital movies and websites, rather than just make a standard conference poster. The students *cared*: not just about their own work, but about the success of the conference. They all took the conference very seriously—the work they displayed was, with few exceptions, of the highest quality. Students also did an excellent job helping to organize the conference as well—for the most part. One of the few disappointments of the course was the amount of student input on the organizational level—I, and the other teachers involved, found that we had to step

in and take care of more of the logistical details than originally planned. In order for the conference to be fully student-organized I believe it should have been explicitly labeled a service-learning class. Overall, all of the conferences that have resulted from my (or other instructors) teaching this curriculum have been rousing successes.

I believe that the success I have experienced teaching this curriculum points to need for a pedagogy that reflects the theoretical framework of network epistemic rhetoric. This pedagogy still should rely on the most important elements of Berlin's social epistemic rhetoric. There must remain a strong emphasis on the critique of cultural codes and ideology. And the texts which are critiqued should always be historicized: they are placed in historical, economic and cultural contexts, and any critique is based upon the assumption that texts cannot exist apart, or autonomously, from the perspective of either the author or the reader. The cultural studies approach to composition advocated by Berlin is also taken insofar as students are required to engage with and produce a wide range of text types: students, for example, work with visual, digital and print rhetorics, among others. The pedagogy of network epistemic rhetoric should also maintain Berlin's commitment to student-centered learning. Social epistemic rhetoric's emphasis on historicization helps ensure that textual meaning will never be understood as operating in a vacuum outside of the perspective of the individual reader.

While network epistemic rhetoric never departs completely from social epistemic rhetoric, there are a number of areas in which the theoretical and

pedagogical paradigm I am suggesting differs from Berlin's paradigm. This revision should not be seen as a critique of Berlin's work, but an extension of it, into a new historical moment. The differences I suggest are usually a matter of new emphases, and based on a much greater body of computers and composition scholarship. There are cases, however, in which I believe that we must revise some of Berlin's epistemological assumptions.

I'm arguing, of course, for a heavier emphasis on the critique and production of technology. In the classroom, this means more attention to a wide range of electronic media and genres, as well as more practice creating digital texts—whether those texts are visual, web-based, video, audio, or all of the above. But I'm also arguing for an understanding of technology that does differ from Berlin's. While Berlin fostered "democracy hope" and operated on the assumption that technology is somehow inherently democratic and egalitarian, I argue, following Terranova (and as evidenced in my analyses of online social networking and blogging), that, while potential spaces for resistance and democracy do exist within digital networks, technology is primarily capitalistic. Therefore, far from naturally encouraging equality and providing the means for empowerment, I believe that, in most cases, technology reproduces the inequalities of the capitalist market, while playing a major role in the production of biopower and the perpetuation of a control society. Therefore, my emphasis on the careful critique of ideological codes found in electronic texts and practices is particularly strong. While I do believe, like Berlin, that we must find and encourage discursive practices in digital spaces that encourage community,

democracy and agency, I also believe that our first priority must be to understand, and teach students to understand, the ways in which technology perpetuates the current, oppressive, mode of production. Thus, in the course outlined above, I ask students not only to produce digital texts such as blogs and websites, I require that students examine the economic and cultural contexts that surround the various media that saturate their daily lives as well as examine how those media perpetuate particular values and power structures.

Network epistemic rhetoric also maintains Berlin's commitment to the empowerment of students. However, it remains skeptical of the ability of technology to facilitate that empowerment through the exploration and construction of multiple subject positions in electronic spaces. As noted earlier, Berlin argues (1994) that agency can be gained through the movement between, and exploration of, varying, even contradictory subject positions. It would seem to follow that the emergence of web-based— as well as virtual reality—technology has provided the perfect means for individuals to gain this kind of agency. After all, as seen above, scholars from Bolter to Turkle have celebrated the freedom to be gained from the exploration of virtual selves. However, as I hope I have demonstrated in my analyses of networking sites and personal blogs, rather than providing the means to gain agency, the digital spaces that ostensibly allow for the creation of varying subject positions most often encourage the creation of identities that conform to and perpetuate dominant cultural values and corporate agendas. Moreover, these sites of supposed freedom are also sites of surveillance by both governmental as well as corporate entities. Therefore, network epistemic

rhetoric does not proceed, at least as far the digital world is concerned, from Berlin's understanding of the relationship between agency and subjectivity. Online subject exploration is viewed primarily as a site of subjugation rather than emancipation.

While Berlin notes the importance of critical pedagogy and a student-centered approach to learning, I believe that critical pedagogy should be even more strongly emphasized as a central aspect of the pedagogy of network epistemic rhetoric. It is not only essential that composition curricula attend to the interests and perspectives of specific groups of students, but that steps are taken to transform the classroom from a traditional, teacher-centered space. By creating a classroom in which students are invested not just in following a curriculum, but in collaboratively developing it, we can avoid Vitanza's and Alcorn's critique that Berlin relies too heavily on the rational understanding of students in his attempt to encourage awareness and subject transformation. As the scholars and practioners of critical pedagogy make clear, any attempt to enable students to become critically aware must engage students both intellectually and emotionally, and this just can't be done in a teacher-centered, monologic classroom.

Further, if the classroom is reorganized around the concept of multitude—that is, if it coheres as decentralized, rhizomatic network—we can perhaps begin to move beyond an understanding of democracy (in the classroom and beyond) as consensus-based, an understanding which tends to follow from the assumption that individuals are rational, autonomous beings. As demonstrated above, networked technology can be very helpful in the development of a classroom

community based on multitude. Electronic spaces such as blogs and even classroom management discussion boards can help create a discourse community that isn't focused on the central figure of the teacher, in which dialogue and collaboration can happen while individual and minority positions are voiced and preserved. Ideally the classroom should be a site of democratic discussion based not on majority rule, or decision by consensus, but on heteroglossia—a dynamic, ever evolving discourse community that remains connected while every individual voice can be clearly heard.

In our emerging network society, as meaning is drowned out by rhetorics of spectacle and affect, and groups are more and more often motivated by a "common passion" rather than a common understanding, it becomes ever more important that we develop an conception of community and democracy that maintains enough coherence and commonality to make collective action possible, but which ensures that the marginalized will never become victims of the terror of totalization.

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