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A Pedagogy of Persistence: Access Through Arrangement in the Age of New Media

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A PEDAGOGY OF PERSISTENCE:
ACCESS THROUGH ARRANGEMENT IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA

by

Jennifer Kontny

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ABSTRACT
A PEDAGOGY OF PERSISTENCE:
ACCESS THROUGH ARRANGEMENT IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA

by

Jennifer Kontny

The University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, 2014
Under the Supervision of Professor Anne Frances Wysocki

Fostering access in our writing classrooms has been a centrally important goal in the field of rhetoric and composition since the social turn in the 1980s. As a means of creating classroom spaces that help students gain access to new identities and ways of being in the world, those in our discipline have long privileged pedagogies that focus on invention. This dissertation traces the work of those working in diverse areas of the field in order to show our wide-spread favoring of invention (or discovery, creativity, or the “new”). Unfortunately, the attention we have paid to invention has come at the expense of attending to other aspects of the composing process in our classes. Namely, I suggest that the increasingly prominent role of invention in writing classrooms has turned our attention away from the conventions and forms of writing (arrangement, genre, structure, organization, grammar, etc.). While asking students to consider writing conventions has largely fallen out of favor in our field, these are aspects of writing that connect us to others in real, lived communities. I suggest that viewing invention as the primary goal of writing instruction has ironically limited the kinds of access our students can experience beyond our classrooms and in the communities where they live and work. In order to better develop a social and civic sense of composing in our first-year writing classrooms, then, I argue we need to rebalance our attention between invention and convention. My dissertation uses the rhetorical

office of arrangement to begin to do such work. I argue that by utilizing classical rhetorical theories of arrangement as well as scholarship on the forms and structures of texts in the field of creative writing, we can craft arrangement-based pedagogies that better meet many of our students' needs. Most importantly, perhaps, the arrangement-based pedagogy that I propose helps us carve out a clearer sense of the social and civic qualities of writing. Such a pedagogy envisions our classrooms as spaces where students engage in the social practice of writing, and can then consider composing as an effective and viable tool for responding and communicating with others.

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PROLOGUE

Reconsidering Access: Moving Beyond Telling Our Old Tale

Academic histories — like all histories — are stories. They are stories that shape our thinking. And in the case of an applied field like rhetoric and composition, they are stories that often determine what is possible within our classrooms. Our story of access has been a favorite of sorts; a story retold in our field for several decades. And here's one way we often tell it: The story begins in the early 1980s, during the social turn. At this time, writing instruction is assigned a central and explicit place in fostering social change. By rejecting oppressive, dominant language conventions (e.g. moving away from teaching grammar or patterns of arrangement) and instead valuing the creation of the “new” within texts, our students can dismantle the inequalities that support the status quo. Through wielding a pen in ways that embrace the radical possibilities of the “new,” we can transform our social and civic spheres. Newness, invention, discovery, and creativity are central to social change and access. At least, this has been our common narrative about access for decades; it is one that — like any story — has its limitations.

This story of access originally emerged during the 1980s, and may not seem as explicitly stated in our field today. Yet, from merely a passing glance at any of our literature since the social turn, it is evident that we have remained devoted to this particular access narrative. Scholars have gone to great lengths to further develop our concept of access, and to apply it more broadly as these social and civic concerns in our field continued to evolve. In our classrooms today, we have experimented with a multitude of pedagogical tools spanning across many genres and modes, each of those purportedly providing new and better means of achieving access. We have asked our

students to produce literacy narratives; utilize alternative discourses; and create collages, comics, webpages, zines, and video compositions. Students in our writing classrooms have created critical and reflective essays and have crafted works of creative non-fiction. They have analyzed everything from Presidential speeches to public memorials to video games. Needless to say, the range of work taken up across our relatively young field in such a short time could make one's head spin. And how have we justified the continual shifts in the kinds of texts we ask students to analyze and produce? Most often, we tell ourselves that we have made these shifts in the name of access. We are working and reworking our approaches to teaching writing so that our curriculums will be most relevant for students in today's social climate. And we make these shifts in the hope that we will indeed foster new and improved avenues of access within the classrooms we share with our students.

Certainly, it is relatively easy to note a large body of literature on access. This is because our experimentation with a multitude of modes and genres as a means to access has been rather impressive. But let's set aside these varied modes and genres as a means of fostering access for a moment; let's consider our approach to "access" on its own terms. It has been difficult to see that despite our seemingly varied approaches to fostering access through a multitude of genres or modes, our approaches to access *itself* have been, in fact, surprisingly consistent. That is, while we've fallen in love with the idea of writing in new genres and with multiple modes as creating new pathways to access, our pedagogical methods across time with/in such various modes and genres have gone relatively unchanged, unexamined. Our work (whether with narrative forms,

alternative grammars, or video games) has thus yielded similar results time and time again despite the mode(s) with which we've asked our students to work, or what genre(s) they've taken up. To be clear, I'm suggesting that while the genres and modes for encouraging access in our classrooms have continued to shift, our understanding of *how exactly* one gains a sense of access in the writing classroom has remained quite stagnant: it is the "newness" of these modes and genres themselves (and the potential we associate with that "newness") that has become deeply enmeshed with access. From this perspective, access hasn't progressed much since the 1980s, the decade out of which it was born.

Our long-standing story of access-as-the-"new" has perhaps served us too well. The counter-narrative I'll propose here will provide an alternative perspective challenging the tale of supposed dynamic shifts moving us closer and closer to our most central social and civic concerns. The counter-narrative to access developed throughout this project is an attempt at seeing what we've missed due to our insistence on making "progress" in our classrooms. To construct this counter-narrative, I draw on forgotten histories in our own field, and I borrow knowledge gained from other disciplinary perspectives. Ultimately, this new story is intended to help us pinpoint (and pick up) some new, promising, and unconventional discussions we've had in recent years, and to help us push and expand upon those conversations as we shape the future of the writing classroom and its role in social and civic engagement.

The Story: The Place of Access in Rhetoric and Composition

Whether our current pedagogies have been primarily guided by the theoretical work of Bartholomae or Bizzell, Berlin or Bazerman, those working within the field today are concerned first and foremost with providing a space within the academy for our students to explore new and other ways of being in the world through their writing. We view composing as a way of directly and immediately accessing power and privilege. And through writing we believe our students can find a place within the communities they inhabit, and can situate themselves in relation to others in the broader world. Our writing assignments and courses and entire curriculums are predicated on understanding writing in relation to such social goals. And while many other disciplines in the academy would agree that opportunities to gain social access are of paramount importance to the larger social function of the university, there are few other fields that dedicate such unwavering attention to access as does ours. While those in literature or creative writing, psychology or physics might believe that their students will leave their classrooms somehow changed, somehow better people or citizens, they don't cling quite as tenaciously to the hope — whether it be laudable or lofty — that through the knowledge their first-year students gain they will be able to change their lives in significant ways. We in rhetoric and composition depend upon the possibility of this belief. We share a powerful common social vision: that there is a strong correlation between the literacies our students develop within our classrooms and their abilities to gain kinds of access in the world outside of the academy. We have long insisted, in fact, that our classrooms are not mere vehicles to gaining access, but that what we teach *is* a kind of access. It is

precisely this vision and these beliefs that have sustained access as one of the most central concepts in our field for the last thirty-five years. So it is fair to say that scholars of rhetoric and composition have fallen in love with social access. Almost every fiber of our field's work seems motivated by it. For better or worse the concept of access has become ours.

While we have become quite enchanted by our story of access, I write because I — like many others, I suspect — have had a rather complicated relationship to this story. Like other scholars in rhetoric and composition, my background in the social sciences initially attracted me to the deep social commitments of our field. Yet over time I've come to wonder about our most central social claims. I've come to want more from them. I often ask myself questions such as these: After all of our dedication to teaching writing in ways that are intended to increase pathways to social and civic access over the last several decades, what *exactly* has changed? In what ways have our efforts to promote social access through the teaching of composition been successful? In what ways could we be doing more to work toward a concept to which we are so wholly dedicated? I have admittedly even begun to wonder this: In what ways might our most cherished pedagogical strategies intending to afford access ironically be hindering certain kinds of access for our students?

As a field we have by and large been hesitant to vocalize or investigate these concerns in serious and sustained ways. Instead of struggling to convey the messiness of our relationship to access in our story, we more often tell ourselves and others the version of our story that has become neatly cemented over time. We say this: *Through the*

teaching of writing we are offering students possibilities to invent and reinvent themselves within the social spheres they inhabit. Through the teaching of writing we are offering students ways of making their social futures their own. Through the teaching of writing we are fostering social change. Instead of publicly airing our questions, we comfortably repeat these lines again and again. And we stand firmly behind our old tale so that it will endure.

Surely, attempting to reconfigure some of our most commonly held beliefs about access will be a difficult and disconcerting thing for us to do. There is comfort in old, familiar stories. A re-telling of the story of access requires us to set these long-standing, comfortable narratives aside, to be vulnerable. It requires us to imagine access and the story of our field differently, and to ultimately attempt to reconfigure our story in ways that might better serve our contemporary purposes, and help us meet our most pressing social goals today. But as uncomfortable as it may be, an attempt at re-telling the story of access stands a chance at achieving something quite valuable. It's possible, I believe, that this retelling could significantly help us explode the possibilities of what it means to compose and to incite change through communicating with others. And as new media texts persistently find their way into our classrooms, this re-telling of the story of access becomes even more necessary. We have needed a better story about access for quite some time, but the holes in our story have become increasingly evident as we struggle to step forward into a new era with an old narrative.

Beneath the Glossy Surface: Problems with Our Story

Despite our reluctance to voice our doubts about the problems with access, we have not been completely ignorant to the criticisms of our field's central aim. Sometimes apparent through conversations we have with colleagues in the hallways of our universities, it is clear that our charmed story about access can easily seem a bit lofty, self-important, or even grandiose. The idea that social transformation can occur in the context of one or two required writing classes might, to some outside of our field, seem a bit over-reaching. Still, we readily respond to critiques like these by admitting that although our efforts may seem rooted in theories that ideally strive toward a more egalitarian world, they are nonetheless worth pursuing. After all, in the contexts of our universities where the liberal rhetorics of "multiculturalism" have prevailed, who could deny that an attempt at providing access — even a failed one — is worthwhile?

But critiques of access are much easier to rebut when they are generated by our colleagues or community members than when they are waged by those sitting within our classrooms. Our literature has often taken up instances where our own students reject the classroom as a space to do socially transgressive work. Instead of casting our classrooms in ways that align with the vision in our scholarship — as spaces where students might pursue *their own goals* and exercise *their own agency* — a significant number of students envision our classrooms as part of a larger oppressive structure of requirements, rules, and regulations. In these instances our classrooms become uncomfortably cast in opposition to the hopes of those like the grandfather of critical pedagogies, Paulo Freire. Freire writes, "Education either functions as an instrument

which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire 34). Although Freirian critical pedagogies attempt to enact education as a means to freedom and social transformation, the broad sense of social access envisioned within these pedagogies leaves little room for understanding the more micro-level ways that our students might view access (ways that, according to Freire, often do little to disrupt the status quo). Because there are instances when our classrooms often act alongside dominant logic (because they are located, after all, as part of a larger system that supports hegemony), even our most well-intentioned critical classrooms might — in certain instances — be interpreted by students as part of a system that perpetuates the status quo. That is, our classrooms become cast as part of a larger system that maintains the status quo rather than a space to help overturn inequality. Given this dilemma, the Freirian view of access that insists on inventing a new system by completely overturning the old can prove quite limiting. Access here is cast as all-or-nothing; students are free if they overturn and critique the old social system, but they are trapped and beholden by their oppressors if they work within it. While there are many iterations of critical pedagogy operating within our field, the dichotomies between the old and new — between being beholden to old, existing structures and overturning them with the radical excitement of the “new” — still exist. Although the discussion of “critical pedagogy” does not circulate as widely in our field as it once did, such dichotomies remain widely and unnecessarily embedded at the

very foundation of our field today. And as I'll go on to argue later, it is precisely these dichotomies that are responsible for our lack of a more nuanced approach when considering questions of access in the first place.

Even when we face little explicit resistance in our classrooms, there are other possible problems, too, with a view of access as stemming from a critical perspective. As Dennis Lynch and Stephen Jukuri write, even when our students don't outright reject the classroom space as providing access, it might be more subtly complicated when the teacher and student fail to understand access in ways that align. Lynch and Jukuri state:

... students at some colleges, or some students at most colleges, arrive in the classroom with goals and the desire to enact them. And while these goals may be relatively conservative, and the actors not inclined to question, even hypothetically, the social formations in which they construct them, they are goals that may well provide them access to new possibilities: better living circumstances, the well-known 'better paying job,' or the credentials to participate in politics and professional life. (282)

Lynch and Jukuri point to a crucially important way that our own critical conception of access might deviate from the ways our students conceive of it, therefore rendering "access" a less straightforward concept than our central Critical theories often envision. Unlike the ways we can dismiss some of the charges of idealism made by our colleagues, the student-centered nature of rhetoric and composition positions critiques by our students as far more troubling as these are supposedly fueling the classroom's exigencies. Yet, despite the problems we encounter with access in both the moments when students

outright refuse to envision a socially transgressive classroom space, and when, as Lynch and Jukuri describe, students insist on a different kind of access, we have done little more than respond to these critiques by retreating back into the very theories that have positioned us vis-a-vis our students in such ways to begin with.

Quite disturbingly it seems that when we face difficulty in getting our students (or colleagues) to buy into our narrative of access, we often fail to address the complexity of their questions, concerns, and resistances. Instead of trying to smartly trouble or re-craft our concept of access in the face of such moments of tension, it seems as though we are mostly reiterating the same long-standing story. We have become experts at telling our story again and again. We have become experts at believing it. We have become experts, too, at desperately hoping that others will eventually be persuaded by access's promise and charm. But it is time, I suggest, to try something else. It is time for us to attempt a re-telling of our story of access, to attempt a counter-narrative that more honestly brings to the surface the history of our struggles with it, as well as the challenges access faces in our classrooms today.

If we assume that there is any degree of truth to those who have critiqued our story of access — that our pedagogical efforts in the name of access have indeed sometimes been vague in their idealism, impractical, lofty, and even grandiose — then we need more satisfying ways of acknowledging and responding to these critiques. Also, if we purport to hold access in such high regard, we need to do a better job at fostering access through our pedagogies, through the practice of teaching writing. This project of constructing this counter-narrative is meant as a starting place for such work. It is a

hopeful project, a chance to more fully encapsulate access's social and civic importance in our classrooms, in our field, and, most importantly, beyond it.

But in order to craft a new story of access, we must first tackle and embrace the problems with the existing narratives. And, as discussed previously, there are many. This project is by no means intended to critique the overall place of access in our field. It is instead — to revisit some language from an earlier theoretical treatise on access by Tom Fox — a project that staunchly positions itself in defense of access's central position in rhetoric and composition. Considering the social and political climate of the United States today, it seems more important than ever that we cling to access as a kind of last bastion for insisting upon *some* attention to the social and civic function of higher education. What we need are more effective ways of achieving this important goal in our classrooms. We need ways of working with access that can be better communicated to our colleagues and community members; we need ways of addressing access that work better for our students.

Plotting the New Story: Access's Counter-Narrative in Rhetoric and Composition

So what might it mean to work in “defense” of access in the 21st century, almost 50 years after the first broad-based educational movements in the United States attempted to afford access for students of color, to grant a kind of basic access for *all* students? Here, I propose that a contemporary project in defense of access is a project that must do four main things: 1) Look carefully at access's past and imagine our story about access in new ways that make visible its relevance in contemporary writing pedagogies (especially,

I'll suggest, as these pertain to new media curriculums); 2) Recover and utilize existing ideas and concepts in our field that help us expand and push at our understanding of what it means to work toward access in the writing classroom; 3) Look to other fields to augment our understanding of how to create a sense of access, particularly through the process of composing; 4) Sketch out what a revised narrative of access might look like when enacted in our classrooms. Here, I sketch out my Pedagogy of Persistence, and reflect on the benefits of such an approach. These four tasks are the basic framework of this project, and I elaborate on the work I do to achieve these central tasks in the chapter overviews that follow.

Chapter 1 Overview

In the first chapter I suggest that access has most often meant either gaining the material resources to succeed in college or wielding language in particular ways within our classrooms. I posit that we have often failed to consider how our pedagogies might concretely foster access in communities *outside* of the university. This chapter offers those teaching writing a concept of access that articulates it to the broader social and civic spheres. It is a view of access that encourages students to persist in developing their writing within and alongside the communities where they interact and live.

To make this argument, I first show how our current approach to access has been insufficient. I look to the recent history of our field where we have focused heavily on two forms of access: 1) Material access, or gaining access to institutions, resources, and tools; and 2) Discursive access, acquiring the ability to wield language in particular ways

(most recently, since the rise of Critical pedagogy, Discursive access has stemmed from invention or creating “new” ideas within texts).

While the Material and Discursive forms of access have taken us so far, I problematize these senses of access by arguing that we have stopped short. We have ignored the ways that access extends beyond the texts in our classrooms and out into communities. To foster access really — socially and civically — I draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s sense of “practice” and Adam Banks’ notion of the “dimensions” of access to argue for the necessity of a third form of access in our field. I call this *Practical access*.

As a way of addressing the challenge of incorporating Practical access in our curriculums, I introduce two “portals” of access: the inventional portal (invention and “the new” are the means of gaining access) , and the conventional portal (working and negotiating existing conventions are the means of gaining access). I suggest that since the rise of Expressivism and Critical pedagogy, we have viewed students gaining access primarily through the inventional portal. However, we have long forgotten about the potential benefits of the conventional portal to access. Moreover, because the conventional portal emphasizes working with established ways of communicating (or conventions), it is central to achieving Practical access (access that extends into communities with already existing conventions.) Ultimately, I suggest the linking of the inventional and conventional portals of access, or what I will come to call the *mediational portal*, is necessary if we truly wish to achieve Practical access in our field.

Chapter 2 Overview

Chapter 2 takes up the challenge of developing the mediational portal of access today. To do this, I turn to the classical scholarship on arrangement. I attempt to resuscitate the canon of arrangement and use a restored sense of this concept to marry convention with invention. I argue that by using an arrangement-based approach to new media (especially to work on “remix” in our field), we can easily highlight the dynamic role between convention and invention (and therefore develop the mediational portal in our classrooms).

I begin the chapter by first reviewing the current sense of arrangement in our field. Unsurprisingly, the concept of “arrangement” has faced troubles in our field today (because of the attention to invention at the expense of the rest of the composing process). Specifically, I review literature on the problems arrangement has faced because of its alignment with convention in our field.

In Part 2, and as a means to address arrangement’s troubles today, I review some classical scholarship. There I argue that although some readings of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian have cleaved arrangement from invention, there is indeed historical precedent for understanding these offices as linked through these classical theories. I use this classical literature to demonstrate that there are aspects of arrangement we’ve been missing by treating the concept in flat or static ways.

After establishing precedent for the linking of invention with convention through the classical scholarship on arrangement, this chapter goes on to address our field’s current moment. I suggest that we can use the body of scholarship on “remix” in new

media studies as a means of resuscitating a focus on arrangement (and the rest of the writing process) today. If we acknowledge a link between what is new and what has come before it, then invention is always a kind of re-mixing (well, before re-mix was “a thing,” that is). This chapter will address how, by resuscitating arrangement — particularly through the concept of “remix” — we will better be able foster mediational access in our curriculums. What arrangement affords us is a better chance to make visible the Practical — the social and civic functions — of composing in our contemporary world. Through arranging we are always considering convention’s relationship to invention, how to best mould and fashion what we say so that it might have an impact on others.

Chapter 3 Overview

While Chapter 2 looked back to the traditions of the past in our own field, the primary goal of the third chapter is to begin looking in the direction of other fields to augment our understanding of how to create a sense of Practical access through the process of composing. While the field of rhetoric and composition has not paid much attention to the properties of arrangement (or other canons past invention) over the last several decades, other fields such as creative writing and the arts have remained interested in arrangement (and the connection between invention and convention more broadly). Perhaps most importantly, though, these fields have focused on the production of texts that use form in ways that highlight the connection between invention and convention.

To make a case for why we need to look to these other fields, the first part of Chapter 3 will explore the differences between notions of “form” in rhetoric and composition and creative writing. I argue that although “form” is a difficult concept to address in both fields (due to the varied language we use to define the term). However, I suggest that the imitation debates make visible important differences in the possibilities afforded through working with form in both fields.

I then suggest three borrowings we might consider as we move forward in our own field. The first of these borrowings is theoretical and posits that work of the Russian formalists in Creative writing might be more carefully considered by those in our field today. The second borrowing addresses works of art in these fields that we might teach in our composition classrooms (I suggest that these works might be considered kinds of “new media”). The final borrowing suggests that we might take a closer look at what is referred to by creative writers and fine artists as “craft talks.” This genre of work is of particular value to those in rhetoric and composition I argue, if we wish to highlight the relationship between invention and convention. The craft talks produced by creative writers and artists might be useful in helping our students produce rhetorical analyses of texts that fall within this genre. However, I suggest that the form of the “craft talk” might be most useful to us if we attempt to craft our own versions of these for academic forms of writing, and if we ask our students to engage in this work as well.

Chapter 4 Overview

The final chapter looks to the future of our field. There, I propose my *Pedagogy of Persistence*. The pedagogy encourages a continued focus on access today, specifically through an arrangement-based approach to new media texts.

Initially in this chapter, I offer an overview of how some of my theoretical work in the preceding chapters fits with my pedagogy. Then, I move into discussing my pedagogical framework that aims to develop mediational access in the classroom. In the final sections of the chapter I propose nine principles that are part of a three-pronged pedagogy incorporating arrangement as a guiding concept for meeting many of our central social goals. I include an appendix showcasing sample assignments and curricular materials for basic and first-year writing courses that work toward achieving this sense of mediational access. While the principles and assignments proposed in my *Pedagogy of Persistence* are still in the process of being tested and reworked, it is my hope that these materials provide some directions from which future experimentation might occur.

And So It Begins...

Like any old tale that has necessarily become more complicated over time, it has been difficult to see access in its complexity. It has been too easy to offer up the winnowed down version of our access narrative which frames the work we do simply as socially progressive and successful. But because I have a strong sense that many in our field struggle with our current relationship to access, and because I know that we need a clearer and more palpable sense of how we might make affordances for access in our

classrooms, I think it is time to attempt retelling our story. In order to foster social and civic access in our writing classrooms *really*, we need to change our minds about how we have approached access. We need a story about access that better captures its complexity, that captures it *in practice*. We need a story about access that is sophisticated in its relationship to conflict both within and outside of our classrooms; a story that is strong, resilient, messy, painful, and true. But in order to revise our field's story, we need to go back, to change our minds, and to forge ahead with a foundation for something stronger and more valuable. We often ask that our students persist with the work they take up in our classrooms. We watch them struggle and fail and try again. I believe that we've been struggling for a long time with the concept of access in our field, but I see that as all the more reason why we should persist.

CHAPTER 1

Reassessing Access: Toward Proposing a New Story

In rhetoric and composition, our interest in “access” is easily traceable over the last thirty-five years. But while the term has had a consistent and revered presence in the field, our current concept of access remains severely limited. While we frequently claim our writing classes are capable of creating broad social and civic access — access extending far beyond the property lines of our universities — we limit our approaches to access to addressing the material conditions of college and the language within our classrooms. In doing so we fail to consider how our contemporary pedagogies might concretely promote access within actual communities, and therefore we perpetually struggle to make clear how *exactly* our writing classes fulfill their purported social and civic goals.

It is problematic enough that we continue to make unsubstantiated claims about the broad social and civic work of our university-centric writing pedagogies. But ironically, our current approaches to access actually discourage students from gaining access within the communities where they live and work. This chapter offers writing teachers a view of access that articulates it with social and civic life. It is a view of access that encourages students to persist in developing their writing within and alongside the communities that matter to them.

To make this argument, in Part 1, I first show how our current approach to access has been insufficient. I look to the history of our field where we have focused heavily on two forms of access: 1) Material access, or access to institutions, resources, and tools; and 2) Discursive access, or access through acquiring the ability to wield language in

particular ways (most often, employing a view of language that privileges invention or creating “new” ideas).

While the Material and Discursive forms of access have taken us so far, in Part 2, I trouble these forms by arguing that we have stopped short. Despite our claims that what we teach in our classrooms helps students gain social access, we have done little substantial work toward making that case. To generate a sense of access *really* — one that better attends to the social and civic spheres — I draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s sense of “practice” and Adam Banks’ dimensions of the “experiential” and “critical” to argue for the necessity of a third form of access in our field. I call this less attended-to form *Practical access* (or access gained through participation or membership; through learning the appropriate codes, actions, behaviors, rituals, and interactions of a given community).

While Practical access has been too often ignored in our field, it is clear why this form of access has given us pause. In Part 3, I ask the difficult question: How do we foster Practical access — a kind of access rooted in communities — within the limited confines of our writing classrooms today? Is this even possible? As a way of promoting Practical access in our curriculums, I suggest we need to make another distinction in *where* and, more specifically, *how* we conceive of access in the first place. Here, I introduce my concept of the “portals” of access.

Later in Part 3 — and through the portals model — I review our current story of access today. Since the rise of Expressivism and Critical pedagogy, we have viewed students gaining access primarily through what I’ll call the “inventional portal.” That is, we see students gaining access by inventing new ideas (most frequently using language in

inventive ways within Discourse). The privileging of invention has been so pervasive in our field that invention has practically become a stand-in for access itself; invention is seen as *the* means of gaining access. Yet, in the latter portion of this section, I complicate our current access-narrative by drawing our attention to an older notion of access in our field. Here I propose a portal of access we've long forgotten about: the conventional portal. The conventional portal posits that working with and negotiating existing conventions is the primary means of gaining access. The notion of access portals allow us to shift our attention away from *where* we gain access (e.g. Materials, Discourse) and instead draw our attention to what one *does* as a means of gaining access (e.g. inventing, working with/in convention). In other words, the portals of access model allows us to uniquely focus on the specific activity linked to gaining access: inventing or working with/in convention.

In Part 4, I use the “portal” approach to propose a new story of access which better affords room for promoting Practical access. I suggest that although the conventional portal has been supplanted by the inventional, in order to attempt to meet our field's social and civic goals, our pedagogies must utilize *both* portals. Moreover, because the conventional portal emphasizes working with established ways of communicating (i.e. conventions), recognizing the conventional portal is central to truly achieving Practical access (which, of course, extends into communities with already existing conventions). Ultimately, I suggest that our best chance at Practical access is to develop curriculums where students understand that access is gained not through either invention *or* convention, but through an intricate negotiation between the two. Near the

close of the chapter, I extend my focus beyond practice theory and draw on new approaches to the term “agency” to propose a third portal of access, the mediational portal. The mediational portal relies on attempts to “mediate” between invention and convention; it encourages students to look to existing conventions to work within, hold steady, transform, subvert, or reinvent as appropriate (and as possible). If we can build portals of mediational access into our contemporary curriculums — especially new media curriculums which, I’ll argue later, lend themselves well to making the mediational portal of access visible — we will establish a more efficient and viable path toward Practical access, a form of access we have long deeply valued, but a form of access that we have rarely achieved.

PART 1: Forms of Access Prevalent in the Field: The Material & The Discursive

Like all academic buzz words, “access” is a term in our field that has taken on a multitude of meanings. I draw on the work of Tom Fox (1999) and Adam Banks (2005) to posit a basic taxonomy of access in the field. The vast majority of our literature has focused primarily on two forms of access: 1) Material access, or gaining access to “stuff” — to institutions, tools, and technologies; and 2) Discursive access, or gaining access through learning and manipulating symbolic codes (over the last three decades, we have especially privileged inventional work with such codes). Both the Material and the Discursive are certainly foundational to access in general; however, I review these forms here to address both what they have historically highlighted and excluded. What have we

been privileging in our efforts to work toward access? And accordingly, what has our current understanding of access rendered invisible?

PART 1A: The “Stuff” of Access: Addressing the Material

In order to review the first form of access, Material access, we need to look back to the very origins of how the term was used in our field. In *Defending Access: A Critique of Standards in Higher Education*, Tom Fox argues that long before the height of the social turn — when access became a popularized concern in rhetoric and composition — access was a term rooted in the literature on the Open Admissions policies of the 1950s and 1960s. During those decades, the majority of the discussions about access privileged the Material. First and foremost, teachers, scholars, and activists alike were interested in paving the way for marginalized students to legally and legitimately physically enter the university, an institution that had previously kept such students out (Fox 1999). In our very earliest access scholarship, then, “access” meant something quite literal. In her article reviewing the history of retention, Pegeen Reichert Powell characterizes this early view of Material access. Powell states, “Once students are in [college] classrooms, they have already, by definition, achieved access to higher education” (673). The view that Powell describes imagines access as binary: students simply had access by being present in the classroom, or they did not.

However, it didn’t take long for this binary view of Material access to be complicated and to be considered instead along a continuum. For example, many began to wonder: What is done to encourage the presence of marginalized students in higher

education? Or conversely, what is done to keep them out of the university system?

Questions like these complicated our sense of access; we soon determined that simply having marginalized students filling our seats did not mean they truly had access. Some of these complications are discussed by Joseph Berger and Susan Lyon, who describe access throughout the 1950s as follows:

Attempts to promote access and diversity on college campuses led to many challenges ... Many campuses were unprepared to deal with a more diverse student body, and many were unable or unwilling to create supportive environments for students of color. Additionally, many students from underrepresented minority groups that were now allowed greater access to higher education had not been provided adequate educational preparation, given the inequities in school systems throughout America. (16)

Here Berger and Lyon describe how, even though more diverse groups of students were admitted to institutions of higher learning, these students (because of a lack of material resources both in their preparation for the university and within the university itself) often could not fully access the institutions to which they were technically admitted. While these students might have earned the right to sit in the seats, many did not feel comfortable or welcome, and many did not succeed. Although Berger and Lyon, like Powell, share a view of material resources as a primary means to access, the Material gets complicated here because it moves beyond something one possesses or does not. Instead, in considering access in Berger and Lyon we are asked to take into account the complex web of material resources necessary to achieve Material access more broadly.

The Material sense of access present in Berger and Lyon's text continued to be prevalent throughout the 1960s and 1970s. But during this time the scholarship takes an interesting turn. Up until this point, many of the arguments for Material access merely tracked, rather than addressed, ways in which marginalized students were excluded from institutions and resources. Berger and Lyon make note of "[in]adequate educational preparation," but do not call into question the social norms and structures surrounding "preparation" itself. During the 1960s and 1970s, however, most of the arguments about Material access call for a radical shift in institutions of higher education, and the reallocation of resources to better accommodate such students. While the difficulties of marginalized students were being merely described and explained through Material access in the 1950s, in the 1960s and 1970s those in the field began to push harder for social change. Another way of putting this is that during the 1950s, those advocating for marginalized students were on the defensive; they were defending the place of students who were arguably "underprepared" to be present within the institutions of higher education. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, however, arguments for inclusion went on the offensive. These arguments shifted the responsibility for inclusiveness onto the institutions themselves by questioning the norms of what it meant to be "prepared" for college in the first place (and in the specific case of our field, what "college writing" should and could look like).

Tom Fox's historical project documents this shift well. Fox draws a correlation between the increasingly wide-spread progressive social movements within universities during that era and the development of the troubled concept of "standards." According to

Fox, after Open Admissions policies were in place, standards were used as gatekeeping mechanisms to work against “ethnic integration” (42). Fox’s proposed pedagogy argues that it is necessary to work in opposition to the notion of standards in order to resist segregation and to encourage Material access for marginalized students. Notice, for example, how Fox categorizes the role of writing teachers in fostering Material access: He states, “as writing teachers, we are institutionally positioned to gate-keep, to do harm. To create access, we must go against the grain” (17). By “going against the grain,” Fox argues that teachers should refuse to buy into “standards,” which he argues are arbitrary. The function of standards for Fox is fundamentally political: standards are a means of sifting through populations of students, sorting marginalized groups into not-for-credit courses, or failing them out of the academy altogether. Drawing heavily on the historical role of standards, fostering Material access for Fox means not just merely admitting students or carving out spaces for them within our universities. Material access instead requires us to actively resist systematic means of holding marginalized students away from the university. Keeping students present and engaged in the university is Fox’s understanding of how to best combat inequality.

Even though we see a significant shift in Fox’s notion of the Material, his privileging of the Material shares a common genealogy with earlier views in the field. For Fox, gaining Material access is the primary and most necessary factor for inciting and sustaining social change. And achieving Material access to the academy meant that other forms of access might easily follow. But to truly make this possible, Fox argues that we

must consistently work to unlock the gates of policy and procedure surrounding Material access itself.

Despite the fervent arguments in our field's history about Material forms of access, for reasons I'll discuss in a moment, we have primarily moved away from viewing access in this regard. Fox's book, published in 1999, in fact served as a reminder of the need to consider the Material today. Surely, the Material view of access offers us something still. It allows us to address questions such as these: Can the measures used for college entrance be changed or shifted to improve the diversification of higher education? What do we need to do to make sure higher education and the resources to succeed are more broadly available? Although today, clearly many more students have the most fundamental, binary sense of Material access (the sense of access characterized by Pegeen Reichert Powell), our retention rates reveal that there are still deep Material inequalities. But scholars as Adam Banks¹, who has worked on the concept of "access" in relation to technology, have argued that in order to really work toward resolving Material inequality, we must look far beyond the Material itself.

¹ In the following section "Part 1B, Cracking the Code?: Examining Discursive Access" I will discuss a number of other scholars who critiqued the Material form of access by instead arguing for the Discursive. However, I draw on the work of Adam Banks here to show how critiques of the Material have manifested over time, as well as to show how these apply to the context of new media today (which will be a central aspect of my argument throughout the project). Also though, because Banks writes later, his critique of the Material is generally more sophisticated than those writing in the 1980s and 1990s, who are simply arguing to supplant a focus on the Material with a focus on the Discursive.

Beyond Screens & Cables & Wires: Complicating Material Access with New Media Scholarship

There have been many challenges to Material access in our field (many of which I'll get to when discussing Discursive access later in this chapter). However, some of the most significant challenges to Material access emerged decades after the initial critiques of the Material in our field. This is because the Material form of access is rather peculiar; it seems to nag at us. It emerges over and over again in a number of diverse sub-fields, which have taken up the issue of access over time². For example, although we have long left Material access behind in our field more broadly, very recently we have seen Material access discussed in scholarship on everything from retention (Powell 2009) to disability studies (Price 2007). Because of the scope of my project, though, I am particularly interested in the relatively recent challenges to Material access from those working in technology and new media studies. Latter portions of this project will discuss the intersection of new media and access more specifically, but here I want to explore how work in new media has helped those in the broader field challenge a Material-centric approach. While the Material approach does a decent job at making Material inequality quite visible (especially if we can move past a binary understanding of Material access), what exactly are the shortcomings of such an approach?

Around the turn of the century, new media scholars heavily embraced a Material perspective of access. Drawing on Olson's concept of the "Digital Divide," early

² It is worth pointing out a trend in Material access, a trend that has held true in the case of new media studies. Despite the eventual shift away from viewing the Material as central in our field, when discussions of access surface in a new body of literature, it is generally the case that we begin with a concern for the Material. That is, whether considering the Open Admissions debates of 1950 and 1960s, the related body of scholarship on retention, the literature on disability studies in our field, or the work on new media, we have always seemed to begin our considerations of access with the Material form of access.

literature often claimed that writing with new media posed unique obstacles to Material access for our students (Janangelo 1991; Selfe 1998; Faigley 1998; Moran 1998; Reagan & Zuern 2000; Grabil 2003). A preponderance of these studies made assumptions that incorporating technology into our classrooms or curriculums would perpetuate inequality and uphold current systems of stratification. These studies argued that students who had access to a computer or the Internet would succeed, while those with little or no access would struggle, or even fail. While the “Digital Divide” debates within new media scholarship brought the concept of the Material front and center once again in our field, it didn’t take long before Material access was complicated further by new media and technology scholars themselves.

In his 2005 book, *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, Adam Banks notes the disturbing pattern of privileging Material access, and he launches one of the most compelling arguments to date against the Material. In describing the Digital Divide, Banks states, “The problem with the Digital Divide as a concept for addressing systematic differences in access to digital technologies is that it came to signify mere material access to computers and the Internet, and failed to hold anyone responsible for creating even the narrow material conditions it prescribed” (41). In the context of the new media access debates, Banks — like many of his predecessors working with Material notions of access in the 1970s and 1980s — grew wary of the limitations of a strictly Material approach. But instead of merely arguing that a Material approach falls short, Banks takes his critique a step further. He argues that Material approaches actually allow us to perpetuate inequality and allow us to fail at “hold[ing]

anyone responsible” for a lack of access more generally (41). For Banks, Material access, or the “equality in the material conditions that drive technology use or nonuse,” is only a small part of a much more complex problem (41-42).

Like Banks, literacy scholar Mark Warschauer also documents the need to shift away from a Material form of access. However, Warschauer does this by complicating the term “Digital Divide” itself. He writes, “The name digital divide can, in fact, refer to several different phenomena. One, for example, is unequal Internet access and usage. A second is unequal ability to make use of the Internet, due not only to unequal access but also to other factors (such as education, language, content, etc.)” (Warschauer 5). Here, in line with Banks’ argument, Warschauer uses the term “access” to problematically refer to the Material sense of the term only. He argues that we need to look beyond “access” to consider things such as “ability” or “education, language, content, etc.” (5). Warschauer’s definition of the Digital Divide affirms Banks’ fear about the limitations of “access” (by equating the term access with the Material). Additionally, his definition supports the need for more nuanced ways of talking about access (and inequality) in relation to technology, ways that fold in concepts like “ability” or “education” (Warschauer 5).

In response to the limitations of access from a Material perspective, Banks’ interest is in exploding the concept of access so that we can address structural inequalities more complexly. By looking more systematically beyond the Material, Banks hopes that we will no longer miss the subtleties of how inequalities play out across our educational system and, more generally, our society. To make his argument complicating our conversation about access in the context of new media and technology studies, Banks

builds on some of Cynthia Selfe (1999) and James Porter's (2002) work to untangle the various usages of "access" in the literature. He proposes four "dimensions" of access: the material, functional, experiential, and critical. Banks uses the functional, experiential, and critical forms of access³ to compel readers to consider symbolic and practical factors that prohibit access socially and civically. While I won't go into the specifics of Banks' dimensions in detail just yet, Banks argues that by considering all of access' dimensions, we can achieve what he calls "transformative access," a form of access that will truly help us address the Digital Divide by extending our attention beyond the Material. If we do not address every dimension of access (dimensions reaching far beyond the Material), Banks warns that changing the structures which support the Digital Divide (and social inequality) is impossible.

While Banks' view of access is generated from a new media and technology perspective, it draws our attention to the grave limitations of a Material approach more generally. Because of the reasons Banks discusses, Material views of access quickly became troubled in our field once again, and thus — despite the nagging Material inequalities that plague higher education — Material-centric views of access have fallen out of favor in new media studies. Today new media studies, like the field more broadly, puts much time and attention into considering access as acquired through language, code, or Discourse.

Because this project is mostly interested in the current state of affairs for access, I won't focus much additional time to addressing the Material form later in the project. Yet,

³ Functional access: skills necessary to make productive use of the technology available; Experiential access: conditions that render the use of technology an important and relevant part of someone's life; Critical access: the understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of employing technology for a given purpose (Banks 40-46).

I want to emphasize here that it is by no means less important or interesting than the other forms of access. As evidenced by our return to the Material throughout the history of our field, it is clear that across the board we seem to agree that the Material is often foundational, essential for gaining any kind of access at all. But the danger with Material definitions of access is that they can be easily reduced. Alas, we seem to like to think of the Material as present or not present. And even when the Material *is* complicated, as Banks points out, focusing solely on the Material distracts us from giving attention to the systematic ways of interacting through language and practice which perpetuate such Material inequalities in the first place. Because of these very grave limitations, our scholarship has often supplanted — or, in the very best cases, has blended — the Material with a Discursive form of access, the form I'll discuss next.

PART 1B: Cracking the Code? Examining Discursive Access

During the 1970s, we see a significant shift in how those in our field understand access. This understanding of access still rests at the very foundation of our field today. The Discursive form of access is a view that sets aside Material resources in favor of privileging the acquisition and negotiation of language. Because the Discursive form of access has been ubiquitous in our field, it warrants a bit more discussion. While I'll initially provide an overview of the Discursive form (much like I did for the Material above), the latter half of this section will focus heavily on the specifics of how *exactly* one is understood to gain access through Discourse over the last several decades. I will focus on the link between Discursive access and the rhetorical office of invention,

arguing that this link was cemented by the rise of Expressivism and Critical pedagogy in our field.

Many of the early discussions about Discursive access stemmed from the scholarship on basic writers and the basic writing classroom (Shaughnessy 1977; Ritter 1998; Fox 1999). We later see this Discursive approach taken up by scholars in literacy studies (Delpit 1995; Gee 2001). Work on genre theory also centralizes the role of Discourse as a primary means to access (DeVitt et. al 2003; Miller 2007). And today, our work on new media and access relies heavily on the Discursive (Yancey 2004; Hull & Nelson 2005). While slightly variant in their exact definitions of “discourse,” scholars from these diverse subfields posit a sense of access quite distinct from the earlier, Material approach. Their “access” recognizes Discourse — most generally understood as language or code interwoven with the social — as the most important means for access, social mobility, or change. For a majority of these scholars the importance of Discourse is so elevated it is seen as *the* means of entering (and exiting) social and civic communities.

Once the protests of the 1960s and 1970s were over, more new groups of students filled the seats of our classrooms than ever before, and the unique challenges faced by writing teachers became more widely voiced and more difficult to grapple with. It was clear we needed new ways of thinking about “access.” Yes, marginalized students now had Material access to the academy (at least on the most surface levels), but their writing often employed language outside of the dominant Discourse, causing friction with the ways we had been teaching writing to homogenous groups of privileged students prior to Open Admissions. As Fox documents, even after Open Admissions policies were in place

across the nation, it became a common trend to use linguistic “standards” to sort students from marginalized groups into “remedial” writing classrooms, and the category of the “basic writer” was popularized (Fox 1999).

The increasing focus on testing and placement along with repeated calls for rethinking and shifting “standards” in the field brought language, or Discourse, front and center. In her seminal text, *Errors and Expectations*, Mina Shaughnessy writes, “Colleges must be prepared to make more than a graceless and begrudging accommodation to [students’] unpreparedness, opening their doors with one hand and then leading students into endless corridors of remedial anterooms with the other” (293). Shaughnessy and many others writing in the 1970s and early 1980s argued that access was acquired not through “begrudging” admissions or other Material accommodations, but by navigating the social complexities surrounding language. To adequately address social inequalities, these scholars argued, we needed to turn toward Discourse itself.

In Shaughnessy’s *Errors and Expectations* we begin to see the increased prominence of language as means of engaging in the social sphere. In this passage, Shaughnessy describes the importance of language in negotiating a “college” identity:

[F]rom [Basic Writers] we are learning to look at ourselves and at the academic culture we are helping them to assimilate into with more critical eyes. Neglected by the dominant society, [Basic Writers] have nonetheless their own worlds to grow up in and they arrive on our campuses as young adults, with opinions and languages and plans already in their minds. College both beckons and threatens them, offering to teach them useful ways of thinking and talking about the world,

promising even to improve the quality of their lives, but threatening at the same time to take from them their distinctive ways of interpreting the world, to assimilate them into the culture of academia without acknowledging their experience as outsiders For the problems of getting an idea and beginning to write, of remembering where one is going as sentence generates sentence, of sustaining the tension between being right and readable and being oneself — these are problems few writers escape. The . . . [Basic Writing] student merely comes to them later than most and must therefore work harder and faster to solve them. (293)

A Material-centric view — even a complicated one — of access was no longer enough to explain sustained inequalities within higher education. Hence, the Discursive view of access was born. Shaughnessy points to the ways locating a college identity happens *within* the writing and thinking students are doing. Here, social position and access are inherently tied to language acquisition. For example, we can see in Shaughnessy that if students acquire the language of the university, they risk losing their initial sense of identity. For Shaughnessy, then, being admitted to an institution of higher learning no longer meant having “access” to that institution; at least, not access in the fullest sense. Once students found their way into the college classroom, a multitude of other hurdles remained. Students had to navigate and negotiate Discourse; they had to shift their identity through language (namely, through writing).

Shaughnessy acknowledges that while no writer is free from the difficult negotiation of identity through Discourse (and the ways that these intersect in the

particular time and space of higher education), marginalized students come to confront these hurdles differently in the academic, middle-class context of the university. While basic writing students might have the same number of hurdles to jump, the hurdles are perhaps higher for basic writers in that there is more distance between where they are coming from and where they need to go in order to be “successful” college students. But the underlying assumption is this: through Discourse itself, this negotiation of identity is possible. If we can incorporate these students into our writing classrooms and find ways of helping them appropriate academic, middle-class ways of writing and talking and thinking, basic writing students will be successful, and our writing classrooms will have fulfilled their social and civic contracts of providing such students a chance at access⁴.

In Kelly Ritter’s 2008 article on the early basic writing classroom, we see a continued focus on Discourse or, in this case, what Ritter refers to as “literacy practices” (16). Here we see Ritter linking literacy practices with broader kinds of social access and social mobility. She writes:

It is true that the main tenet of basic writing pedagogy (and advocacy) is to ensure, first, an egalitarian access to academic literacy for underprepared students within an accessible, affordable institution and, second, a social and cultural mobility for these students, a mobility that corresponds to the institution's larger mission Also true is the fact that the vast majority of basic writing students whom we encounter in our teaching come from marginalized social or communal

⁴ I want to emphasize here that although Shaughnessy suggests that we consider the marginalized nature of students identity, she seems to whole-heartedly support the teaching of academic conventions. This is important to note because it distinguishes earlier theories of Discursive access from later theories which argued that there was no need — and, in fact, it was a means of oppression — to impose standard conventions on marginalized groups of students.

spaces, often with literacy practices that are in conflict with those of academia. These are students at the mercy of university placement systems, national and local standardized tests, and other intake measurements that do little to measure what students know but instead how they can perform in a de-personalized assessment situation. These are the students who are often delayed in their entrance to credit-bearing writing courses, in some administrators' hopes that they will give up and disappear from college altogether. In Gail Stygall's words, basic writers are "like boxers who are bleeding and winded but not yet ready to quit." (Ritter 16-17)

What is perhaps most interesting about Ritter's passage is that egalitarian access to "academic literacy" practices is clearly tied to "social and cultural mobility" (16). The key underlying assumption here is that through acquiring "academic literacy" (or academic Discourse) basic writers will be able and willing to transform their lives. Ritter acknowledges the role of the Material when she mentions how this academic literacy should be acquired in, "accessible, affordable institutions" (16), but while it is clear that Discourse is the means by which students can change their life circumstances (providing they are able to acquire the necessary literacy practices within our college classrooms, that is). However, while Discourse is the site for social access and mobility here, so too is it precisely what has hindered these students thus far in their lives. According to Ritter, standardized tests and in-take measures have been incapable of truly assessing these students' broader literacies (those not valued or "in conflict" with the literacy or Discourse of the academy). But despite the effects of Discourse, whatever those may be,

it is clear that Discourse is the means by which one is stuck and stigmatized or is able to move forward.

For Shaughnessy, Ritter, and many other basic writing scholars writing during the last several decades in our field, then, Discourse is determinate of social situatedness. And by fostering environments where students can acquire specific Discourses (for Shaughnessy and Ritter, the literacy practices of academic discourse) they can gain access. It is key to note here, though, that for early scholars valuing Discursive access, the central challenge is in getting students to bridge, borrow, and adapt aspects of dominant Discourse for their own purposes. While scholars like Shaughnessy and Ritter acknowledge the identity conflicts of the basic and first-year writing classrooms, they view classrooms as spaces where marginalized students can consider and negotiate the conventions of dominant Discourses as a means to gaining access. And as I'll discuss later, this focus on dominant Discourse conventions as a means to access has become as unfashionable as the mullet. While we indeed continue to see Discourse as the means to access today, it is the "new" in discourse — invention — not the conventions of the dominant Discourse which is valued.

Beyond Basic Writing: The Ubiquitousness of the Discourse Dialogues

While basic writing scholars were among the very first to utilize a Discursive approach to access, a variety of other subfields quickly assumed this perspective. During the 1970s and 1980s, access was a conversation we had mainly in relation to the history of Open Admissions and the basic writing classroom. However, during the 1990s

conversations about access in the field took off with the rise of work on language and literacy studies in rhetoric and composition. Conversations in literacy studies such as the famous debate between James Paul Gee and Lisa Delpit furthered our interest in Discourse as the site of social access. This debate spurred entire books and articles devoted to questions about how *exactly* access was gained through the negotiation of Discourse.

Specifically, Gee and Delpit debated *how* and *to what extent* Discourse shaped social possibilities for individuals. Of specific interest to many in our field was the role that Gee and Delpit ascribed to writing and language teachers. Following the work of those in our field like Shaughnessy and Ritter, we wanted to know how we could best foster the acquisition of dominant Discourses, and thereby foster broader social access. By reviewing the Gee and Delpit debate below, one thing will be made clear: by this time (the mid-1990s into the turn of the century) Discourse or linguistic practice was the central place in our field where access was understood to occur. We had moved past asking *if* Discourse was a more important factor than the Material, and instead heavily debated *how*, *why*, and *to what extent* Discourse shaped access and, ultimately, our students' chances at achieving upward social mobility.

In the 1990s, the idea of dominant Discourses — discourses wielded by those with social power, prestige and high levels of status — had already been well-established in our field (Shaughnessy 1977; Delpit 1995; Ritter 1998; Gee 2001). If we were to make claims that our writing classrooms could truly foster paths toward social change, then we needed to figure out the relationship between dominant Discourse and the students who

entered our classrooms as outsiders or “others” to such Discourses. We needed to figure out if and how we could help these students learn this Discourse and, most importantly, appropriate it for their own purposes.

James Paul Gee takes up the question of acquisition of Discourse as a means to social change. He states, “The crucial question is: How does one come by the discourses that he or she controls?” (Gee 539). Gee posits that we are all born into a primary Discourse (a way of using language through social practice). But for those not born into a way of life that makes a dominant Discourse available, it is “literacy” — which Gee defines as “control of secondary uses of language” — that really matters for gaining access and achieving social mobility (542). Although Gee stresses the difficulty of acquiring new (and especially dominant) Discourses, it is *attempting* to becoming literate in such Discourses that he views as *potentially* transformative for both individuals and social structures alike. It is important to emphasize, though, that while Gee sees Discourse as the site of social access, he is quite reserved about claiming acquisition as *the* solution to the access problem. This is because, for Gee, social actors/speakers are deeply attached to their primary discourses, and dominant discourses are relatively fixed. The inherent conflict between primary and secondary dominant Discourses for many marginalized students leaves little room for significant gains or broad-based kinds of access to be gained through Discourse. In other words, Gee has doubts that all Discourses (especially dominant discourses) are teachable to all students.

Lisa Delpit, like Gee, shares a view of Discourse as incontestably central to social access. Yet Delpit’s view places significantly more weight on the transformative power of

Discourse, and we see an important shift in Delpit's thinking. Unlike Gee, who proposed that there were conflicts between Discourses (and related troubles with acquisition and gaining literacy), Delpit views Discourse much more flexibly and fluidly, focusing on the potential of acquiring new discourses. She writes:

There are two aspects of Gee's argument which I find problematic. First is Gee's notion that people who have not been born into dominant discourse will find it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to acquire such a discourse ... The second aspect ... suggests that an individual who is born into one discourse with one set of values may experience major conflicts when attempting to acquire another discourse with another set of values. (Delpit 546-47)

Here, it is clear that Delpit finds Gee's notion of Discourse constraining. By loosening the boundaries around which Discourses one can easily acquire and dismissing the inherent conflict that Gee describes between competing discourses, Delpit imagines Discourse as offering even more potential pathways to access. This loosening in Delpit's view of Discourse shifts the focus away from fixed, dominant conventions (a view of Discourse shared, in part, by diverse scholars such as Shaughnessy, Ritter, and Gee). Instead, Delpit's more flexible sense of Discourse focuses on multiplicity, on using competing and conflicting Discourses in new ways (and as a means of making new meaning and creating change).

Another interesting quality of Delpit's rebuttal, which highlights her emphasis on the "new," is her insistence that those who acquire a Discourse participate in the shaping of that Discourse itself (thus making it anew). Delpit writes, "Acquiring the ability to

function in a dominant discourse need not mean that one must reject one's home identity and values, for discourses are not static, but are shaped, however reluctantly, by those who participate within them and by the form of their participation" (552). By merely participating in a Discourse, then, the speaker/writer has the potential to transform such a Discourse and thereby transform the community to which that Discourse is linked. Delpit's insistence on a more fluid definition of Discourse in this case ascribes language with even more power to stand-in as the social itself. If we can acquire and participate in a Discourse, we transform our own social circumstances, but we can also transform the Discourse community itself. In other words, it is making the "new" through language that enables social change itself.

Delpit argues that there is room for teachers to carve out spaces within classrooms that will indeed foster social change. On this she states:

What can teachers do? First, teachers must acknowledge and validate students' home language without using it to limit students' potential ... Second, teachers must recognize the conflict Gee details between students' home discourses and the discourse of school ... A final role that teachers can take is to acknowledge the unfair 'discourse stacking' that our society engages in. (Delpit 554)

Here, Delpit calls for educators to validate "home languages" and to recognize the social distance between Discourses and the weight ascribed to some Discourses over others (i.e. "discourse stacking"). By validating language in this way, Delpit sees us as validating identity thereby providing pathways to access. By openly and honestly making the differential power of various Discourses apparent to students, teachers can help make

acquisition possible. If students are able to learn new Discourses, they are thereby shifting their identity or forging access into new communities. While Gee takes a more conservative, Bourdieuvian approach to Discourse (one more tightly linked to convention), Delpit argues that Discourses are, in fact, substantially more acquirable than Gee suggests and are more powerful than we might have imagined.

Both Gee and Delpit's views of Discourse have been discussed rather widely. Today, our larger body of scholarship on literacy studies views the role of Discourse more hopefully, and in ways that have become more aligned with Delpit. But whether we see Discourse as a fixed concept like Gee, or one more flexible like Delpit, both scholars agree on one central factor: Discourse, particularly if one can acquire it by becoming literate in particular Discourses is *the* site of social transformation. Discourse is, more often than not, the place where social status is upheld and safeguarded for Gee, and it is the place where we can fudge, and flex, and push at the margins for Delpit. But in either case, linguistic practice here is not seen as a gateway to the social. Rather, *Discourse is the social*.

In addition to the work in literacy studies and linguistics, another subfield that rapidly embraced the notion of gaining access through Discourse is genre studies. In this case, by acquiring genre knowledge, students are seen to be able to enter and shift communities. In genre theory, textual genres become so linked to lived, practical communities themselves, that genre theorists crafted language to differentiate between textual communities and lived, social communities. For example, lived communities are referred to by genre theorists as "communities of practice," as opposed to the textual

iteration of community which is referred to as a “discourse community” (DeVitt et al. 2003). Because of the central role of language in establishing community, though, genre theorists would see a great deal of overlap between “communities of practice” and “discourse communities.” One can act, can participate, and can adhere to (and violate) communal norms all within and through language. Community, for genre theorists, is a concept that depends more on words than on the messiness of practice in worlds.

Similar to what we witnessed in Delpit’s work, a preponderance of genre theorists make the assumption that genre conventions can largely be taught, and that through genre instruction we can foster access to everyday communities. For example, DeVitt et. al state, “Recognizing the presence of genres helps us to recognize the palpability and complexity of our discourse communities, to reduce their abstract, symbolic status, thereby making discourse communities more visible and accessible” (552). Here it is clear that recognizing genres within Discourse makes communities more “visible” and therefore provides writers with opportunities to enter or interact with such communities. Understanding the genre-complexity of a community is what gains one access, and engaging in textual genres moves us beyond the text and into the practical, social sphere itself. DeVitt et. al state:

Whether examining legal, medical, or pedagogical genres, genre study gives us specific access to the sites of language use that make up communities, in all their complexity. When we use genre analysis as ethnomethodological technique, we not only gain access into communities, but also begin to recognize how ‘lived textualities’ interact with and transform ‘lived experiences.’ Such recognition

becomes especially significant when we are teaching students how to use language to participate more knowledgeably and critically in various sites of language use. (549-550)

Here again, we can see that genre knowledge and language use is the site at which one can “gain access into communities,” as well as recognize how to critically transform such communities. While the sub-fields of basic writing studies, literacy studies, and genre work are quite differently positioned in our field, they share a common and wide-spread assumption about Discourse: that it is the most important and fundamental site for gaining social access. These sub-fields have all relied on the firm belief that through the acquisition of Discourses social change and transformation are not only possible, but probable. And it is precisely this belief that has provided the historical buttressing for the flood of arguments about writing classes as a means of access in our field.

While early work on Discursive access focused around fostering access through the acquisition of dominant Discourse, Delpit’s work demonstrates a shift in our attention toward the social power of acquiring and crafting new Discourses as well as making Discourses anew through our participation. The next section on Discursive access and new media will demonstrate how that focus on the “new” — on invention — is thriving in our field today.

**Locating Discursive Access Today:
New Media Discourse and the Increasingly Prominent Shift Toward Invention**

I have discussed the centrality of Discursive access in our literature within a number of sub-fields. Today, Discourse remains the central site for gaining access in our

field more broadly. Honestly, the number of examples that could evidence Discursive access are countless (any claim which focuses on language or writing as transformative, liberatory, or inherently social could likely be included here).

It is unsurprising, then, that Discursive access is ubiquitous in the body of new media scholarship as well. Those such as Kathleen Blake Yancey argue that technological Discourse — like more “traditional” forms of language — is inherently social, and that composing effectively and with control with new media Discourse is necessary for adequate social and civic participation in our contemporary world. Yancey writes:

If we continue to partition [technology] off as just something technical, or outside the parameters governing composing, or limit it to the screen of the course management system, or think of it in terms of the bells and whistles and templates of the PowerPoint screen, students in our classes learn only to fill up those templates and fill in those electric boxes — which, in their ability to invite intellectual work, are the moral equivalent of the dots on a multiple choice test. Students will not compose and create, making use of all the means of persuasion and all the possible resources thereto; rather, they will complete someone else's software package; they will be the invention of that package. (320)

Here we see Yancey, like others (Wysocki 2004; Shipka 2005), calling for us to meaningfully compose in new media as a means of enacting social and civic participation. If we fail to understand the value of composing with/in new media, then we are foreclosing our students' options for composing not only the kinds of texts they desire but the kinds of lives they want and the kinds of futures they wish for themselves.

Technological Discourse is a necessary gateway to the richest sense of access. Essentially in the passage above, Yancey is calling for us to extend the ways we conceive of Discursive access to encompass the digital and technological. In Yancey's view, the digital has increasingly become a dominant Discourse. It is imperative for Yancey, though, that students learn not only the conventions of composing within this Discourse but how to invent with/in it.

The earlier writings of Shaughnessy, Ritter, and even Gee focused on fostering the acquisition of the conventions of dominant discourse. But Yancey doesn't simply want students to learn the dominant conventions of composing within technology; she wants them to instead invent and create with it. In Yancey's view, invention through technological Discourse is crucial: students are to invent or be invented by technology. She draws a line between convention and invention by positing that students either compose by "fill[ing] up those templates and fill[ing] in those electric boxes" or by "creating" or inventing. Like Delpit's focus on the "new" in Discourse, we see in Yancey a heavy privileging of the inventive aspect of composing. And because of this, she — like a broad range of other new media scholars — sees unique potential in new media to serve as a means of access for our students. New media, after all, is often affiliated with newness in general and cast as more capable than traditional print mediums of encouraging inventive work.

The broad body of work in new media scholarship highlights invention as an asset specific to new media. But I will show in the next section that throughout our field's recent history, we have increasingly linked the Discursive to invention as a means of

making claims about social access through writing. As we see in Yancey above, for example, new media is championed as a particularly salient means of fostering Discursive access precisely because of its ability to produce the “new” within Discourse. Similarly, Hull and Nelson write that new media or multimodal texts, “can afford, not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning” (225). I argue that this chance at “newness” through new media Discourse has been largely responsible for its increasingly wide appeal in rhetoric and composition (because, as I will soon argue, we have long held the “new” in high esteem). Even though today new media seems to have the market share on claims to “newness” in our field, it is necessary to note that we have increasingly deeply valued invention through Discourse for decades. In the following section, I will show that with the rise of Expressivism and Critical pedagogy, we practically cemented invention (or the “new” in language) with Discursive access itself. Discourse theorists came to be increasingly invested in the belief that we could best foster access through the “new” in Discourse. By inventing with/in language, they believed we could pave the way to “new” social structures.

**Tracing the Origins of Privileging the “New”:
The Influence of Expressivism and Critical Pedagogy**

The arguments about new media Discourse as an ideal site for social change hinge upon new media’s ability to break free of old structures embedded in print forms and language all together. It is argued that new media can create new forms and so can resist the dominant power structures embedded in codified, traditional forms (The New London Group 2000; Yancey 2005; Hull & Nelson 2005). This body of literature — like other

Discourse models focusing on print — posits that access stems from the Discursive (albeit, particularly technological Discourse in this case). But it is specifically and especially the “new” in Discourse that is of value for new media scholars. From a current glance at our field, it might seem as though our focus on the “new” emerged alongside new media. While we saw a glimpse of the shift toward privileging the “new” in Discourse in Delpit’s work, in this section I will show how our focus on the “new” — on invention — actually came into our field decades ago and has steadily gained momentum. With the rise of Expressivist and Critical pedagogies, we see increased attention to invention with/in Discourse as a means of social access throughout the 1980s and 1990s. And today our field is so steeped in arguments about invention as *the* means to access that it has become difficult to imagine how we might untangle these terms (“invention” and “access”). In other words, it has become increasingly difficult to imagine how one might gain access if not through inventing the “new” through language.

In considering the history of the “new” in our field, I turn to Expressivism and Critical pedagogy. Both models share a common narrative: the student writer comes to consciousness by breaking down the old and creating the “new.” In Expressivism, the “new” emerges from a student locating her or his authentic voice, and through Critical pedagogy students find “new” critical perspectives as a means of social transformation. While Expressivism and Critical pedagogy are often viewed as oppositional pedagogies by those in the field, I will show in this section how both models support a coming-to-consciousness-through-the-new-in-language narrative. In other words, both views

position the individual's work in inventing with/in language as central to achieving access and social change.

Distilled to its simplest form Expressivism was primarily aimed at helping the individual discover her or his authentic voice. Ann Ruggles Gere emphasizes the role of authenticity in describing the Expressivist movement:

The expressivist perspective ... counts Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, and Donald Stewart among its proponents. For them, as for others who take this view, the concept of voice is central. *Authenticity, ownership, and empowerment* are key terms in their discourses. Many of the essays [call] upon the authority of one's own experience and rendering it in prose suffused with an authentic personal voice. (204; emphasis in the original)

In her account of Expressivism, Gere emphasizes the individual, authentic voice and the "authority of one's own experience." This authenticity is gained by working through and breaking old ways of thinking/being and replacing it with a newer, truer sense of self. Expressing these narratives of a "true" self then becomes the means of gaining authority. Later in her article, though, Gere states that because of the strong Expressivist attachments to particular kinds of individual narratives, the Expressivist movement is rather vulnerable to charges of "solipsism" (205-206). These charges of solipsism were often made against Expressivists by social constructionists and Critical pedagogues, both focusing much more heavily on broader social critiques.

While it is true that there is a strong emphasis on the individual in Expressivist models, as Gere suggests, according to other theorists Expressivism does provide us with

some perspective on how the individual is tied to her or his community. The link between the individual and community is important to note because by finding a new, authentic voice, students are understood to be able to more clearly reflect and shape the future of their communities. As I will show in the next paragraphs, in Expressivism we see the prominent link common across models of Discursive access, where through an individual's interaction with language he or she thereby shapes the social and civic spheres.

In her article, "Ownership Revisited: An Exploration in Progressive Era and Expressivist Composition Scholarship," Linda Adler-Kassner writes about the more implicit connection between the individual and community through an Expressivist lens. She states, "Expressivists framed composition as a medium that could help preserve and build community. However, this community primarily reflected the values of the individualistic/expressivist culture" (Adler-Kassner 217-18). Adler-Kassner argues here that although Expressivists valued community, they saw the means of achieving community as beginning with an individual consciousness. She explains that the coming-to-consciousness in Expressivism was often achieved through a three step pedagogical process of "journaling, meditation, and analogy" (219). While journaling and meditation are, of course, more individual acts, in the "analogy" stage of composing students were *thought* "to understand the connection between [their] experience and others" (219). Although Adler-Kassner points out some potential social considerations of Expressivism, it is important to note that the three step pedagogical process she writes about relies heavily on audience-less forms (i.e. journaling and meditation); forms that value free-

flow order over communicating with others. While Expressivism starts with (and highlights) the role of the individual, it can see the individual's work as finding a new, truer, more authentic voice as a means of possible social and civic engagement. This relationship between the "new," the individual, and the community is fleshed out by Adler-Kassner as follows:

Ownership of ideas, of expression, and of the product produced at the end of the writing process was thus the most important goal of writing. In fact, here the entire writing process — from prewriting, to articulation of ideas, to final product — was designed to defeat the emergence of a sort of "false" consciousness in favor of the production of genuinely owned ideas expressed in an "authentic voice" (to borrow the title of a textbook by expressivist Donald Stewart). Once students developed this ownership, predicated on greater self-understanding, it was assumed that they would then "connect" with others in a community sharing the greater self-knowledge and self-awareness. This community was also outlined by language, then, and participating in the language of the community meant participating in the (middle-class) values reflected in it. (218)

While Expressivists don't use the language of "newness" as readily as the Critical pedagogues, at heart this movement was about replacing an old, false-consciousness with a newly-found authenticity. That which was newly-found — the authentic voice — was then supposedly used as a means of reshaping community. Like other theories valuing Discursive access, we see the tight linking between language and community when Adler-Kassner states, "community was also outlined by language, then, and participating

in the language of the community meant participating in the (middle-class) values reflected in it” (218). Expressivism, in this regard, does not differ from our theories today that cling to the fundamental belief in language as the site of the social.

In sum, while Expressivism is arguably unique in that it brings the individual and her or his “authentic” experience front and center, it shares with many other theories a focus on language as means to access, and the locating of new expressions (of self) as a means to social change. Wendy Bishop, a cross-disciplinary scholar in composition and creative writing, argues that our attacks on Expressivism — especially from a Critical, social constructionism framework — have been unfair. Bishop defends the Expressivist movement against such attacks by stating, “I argue that key-expressivists (so called, not self-labeled) are frequently cast as convenient straw-men, as now-aging, no longer compositionally-hip, and therefore slightly embarrassing advocates of a 1960s touchy-feely pedagogy from which professionals in composition are currently trained to distance themselves” (10). Bishop goes on to write about the relationship between Expressivists and those in the field who considered themselves “writers,” arguing that Expressivism is more complicated than we often portray and that it shares relationships with not only creative writing pedagogy but with aspects of social constructionist (or iterations of Critical pedagogy) pedagogy itself. I agree with Bishop’s claim that our field continues to draw firm distinctions between Expressivism and Critical pedagogy when, in fact, the two share some surprising theoretical overlap. I demonstrated here how Expressivist models often rely on the coming-to-consciousness of an individual writer through locating a new, authentic voice. One of the most significant contributions to our field

from an Expressivist perspective, then, is something we hardly talk about. While *the* individual, authentic voice has all but faded from our field today, what remains is a focus on how that individual voice comes to consciousness through the “new.” It is precisely this “newness” (originally present in the Expressivist voice) that gets carried over to the Critical model. Both models — Expressivism *and* Critical pedagogy — focus on the power of the “new” or invention through Discourse as the means of social access, social engagement, and — eventually — social change.

The Expressivist idea of locating a “new” authentic voice certainly brought invention into soft focus in our field. But our focus on the “new” became exponentially sharper with the emergence of Critical pedagogies. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire described what he saw to be the “banking model” shaping most education: Freire argued that this operative model of education positions students as empty vessels ready to be filled by the knowledge of their teachers. According to Freire and other Critical pedagogues taking up his work, traditional knowledge and traditional classroom practices were used as a means of positioning students outside of the realm of knowledge-production, thus perpetuating hegemony and supporting the status quo. The *only* way for students to escape the banking model of education (and thus hegemony) in our classrooms was for students to come to consciousness by breaking down the traditional and building new knowledge, knowledge located completely outside of existing, oppressive structures (Freire 1970; Giroux 1983, 1988; hooks 1994; McClaren 1998).

Specifically, Freire proposed that in order to give students access to the process of knowledge-making, students should break free of traditional structures through critical

thinking (and through critical thinking, students would develop a critical consciousness, which would, in turn, guide them in acting as agents of social change). Put differently, Henry Giroux argues that critical pedagogy — at base — helps student eschew oppressive structures and “exercise power over their own lives, especially the conditions of knowledge production and acquisition” (218). Power, for Giroux, Friere, and others in this theoretical camp, was inherently linked to production, to the making of the “new.” The general hope of Critical pedagogy is that students can transform their lives through liberal democratization and further promote critical forms of civic participation (Freire 1970). Critical pedagogies thoroughly transformed our field, but this transformation has come at a cost. Because of the immense influence of these writers, we have — literally — thrown out the old — and many other aspects of the writing process — in favor of the “new.”

It is significant to note that Freire’s focus on moving away from traditional forms and social structures coincided in our field with the continued work on basic writing happening throughout the 1970s. (Freire would view the “standards” written about by Fox, for example, as part of the “banking model” of education). This perhaps made a Critical model quite at ease in our field. By reflecting on our field’s history with Open Admissions, Freire’s work provided us a way of seeing existing institutional structures as oppressive and deeply in need of radical reform. In the case of the basic writing arguments, Freire’s theory supported a move away from “standard” language conventions (which were, again, seen to belong to the dominant logic) toward alternative discourses (Bizzell 1992). Seen from the most radical, Freirian perspective, in fact, some of the

arguments made by those in our field arguing for Discursive access (Shaughnessy 1977; Ritter 1998; Gee 2001; Devitt et. al) seem conservative because they aim to help students acquire the dominant Discourse (albeit through acquiring “new” codes). But from the most staunchly Critical perspective, many of the theorists I reviewed above would be thought not interested enough in helping students invent something completely new in totality, something not beholden to those in power in the first place.

The value of the “new” within Critical pedagogy is summarized well by Rich Heyman. On the importance of critical approaches to literacy he states, “Offering students these new phrases and frameworks can encourage them to destabilize common ways of knowing and viewing the world” (Heyman 147). As critical pedagogy increasingly worked its way into our field, then, the “new phrases and frameworks” promoted by a critical model were levied against any remaining conventional approaches in the field.

Most disturbingly, since the emergence of Critical pedagogies, we have increasingly used moral language to discuss the necessity of privileging invention. While I will discuss the role of invention much more thoroughly and specifically in Part 3 (where I introduce what I’ll call “the inventional portal”), it is fair to say that the theoretical weight of invention on our field more generally has been noteworthy. We have focused so heavily on invention as the means to social access, that any attention to areas within the composing process beyond invention⁵ are looked upon as unfashionable at best and morally reprehensible at worst. For example, in an article on teaching rhetorical

⁵ By “beyond invention” here, I am referring to the rhetorical offices of invention, (judgement), arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Because Expressivist and Critical pedagogies put so much emphasis on invention, they often don’t attend to the remaining offices.

approaches to grammar, Laura Micciche states the following, “A familiar argument against teaching formal grammar, particularly forceful since the rise of process pedagogies, insists that integrating grammar instruction would dangerously reduce time spent on higher-order concerns like invention” (720). Here Micciche describes how we have lost focus on (grammatical) convention because of our unwavering attention to invention. Notice the language that Micciche uses: attention to grammar would “dangerously reduce time spent on higher-order concerns like invention” (720). We can read Micciche as being tongue-in-cheek here with her imperative to attend to invention over all else. But Micciche’s use of the adverb “dangerously” — while certainly demonstrating the view of anything detracting from invention as morally reprehensible — is by no means an exaggeration of the feelings of many in the field toward grammar (or other conventions).

In her article entitled “Closing the Books on Alchemy,” Martha Kolln traces our negative attitude toward grammar back to what she argues are early, problematic studies in our field. Kolln attributes the dismissal of grammar in the composition classroom to a 56-word soundbite commonly excerpted in our field from the Braddock report, an NCTE report published in the 1960s, that Kolln argues was excerpted inaccurately throughout the next several decades. The commonly-cited Braddock report soundbite that Kolln refers to reads as follows:

In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually

displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing (pp. 37-38). (Kolln 139)

Kolln argues that the phrase “formal grammar” in these sentences was misinterpreted and that the language critiquing grammar instruction was too strongly worded considering the research presented to back up the claims. It is interesting, though, that the report does make clear that “formal grammar” was not included in the practice of teaching “actual composition.” While this report doesn’t explicitly mention invention, we might keep in mind that it was a report repeatedly cited throughout Critical pedagogy’s early heyday (where invention and convention were viewed as mutually exclusive in our pedagogies). As I’ll show in the section on invention later, these moral charges in the name of “actual composition” are made repeatedly against any attention to convention at all⁶, thus preventing those in our field from gaining enough gumption to pursue approaches that value convention (such as Micciche’s proposed return to grammar through a rhetorical lens). And it is worth noting that although Micciche, a prominent rhetorical scholar in the field, writes to promote what she calls “rhetorical grammar” in 2004, today — ten years after Micciche writes — teaching grammar remains highly unfashionable. Even if we don’t talk often or explicitly about Critical pedagogy today, its influence has penetrated the very core of our field. I argue that our continued refusal to teach grammar (or many other conventions) in our writing classrooms has little to do with an unfairly cited NCTE report alone or even in our belief in grammar’s (lack of) value. I argue that grammar’s exile has much more to do with the ways in which grammar (because it is tightly linked

⁶ We might recall Yancey’s quote above on the importance of considering invention in new media discourse rather than relying on already existing conventions.

to convention and the idea of a dominant Discourse) is simply viewed as irreconcilable with our belief in the transformative social power of invention.

The Limitations of Discursive Access

While Discursive access offers us a potential way to think about how we might use language to constitute or shift community most generally (by considering a textual genre, for example), we have little way of knowing how those considerations impact what DeVitt et. al call “a community of practice.” That is, although our claims about gaining social and civic access *through* Discourse extend us beyond the walls of our classrooms, we have no real means of substantiating those claims. Further, I will argue that our increased attention to the office of invention as a means of Discursive access severely limits the ways in which students can enter real “communities of practice” via Discourse. If we ask students to only skim the surface of conventions integral to communities of practice (or ignore convention altogether), we are limiting real chances for our students to take part in those communities. And instead of grappling with the conventions of an already existing community, we ask students to discover and invent for their own purposes. While a Discursive approach to access, then, could arguably be viewed as simply incomplete, our current Discursive approach focusing heavily on invention (at the expense of convention) might be viewed, as Gere suggested earlier, as solipsistic and as limiting one’s capacity to consider the social and civic in serious or sustained ways. While it is of course true that we can act socially and civically through composing texts, there are good reasons to distinguish between the kinds of work we can

do in the realm of language alone and what we can do beyond it. I will go on here to discuss the necessity of making this distinction in relation to the third form of access, Practical access.

PART 2: The Problem of the Practical

In the year 2000 — almost thirty years after Critical pedagogy entered our field and cemented the place of “the social” in writing — Keith Gilyard published his article, “Literacy, Identity, Imagination, Flight.” Gilyard states, “If we agree to aim for a radical, transcultural democracy ... then we need pedagogies to foster the development of the critical and astute citizenry that would pursue the task” (262). Terms like “radical, transcultural democracy” and “critical and astute citizenry” are not unique to Gilyard’s work. Phrases like these have been peppered throughout our field’s literature for decades now. In fact, Gilyard’s relatively recent call for pedagogies that foster a “critical and astute citizenry” closely echo the calls by Paulo Freire in the 1970s, Giroux in the 1980s, and Bizzell, McClaren, and many others throughout the 1990s. And the claims continue today. The goal of social transformation through Discourse — specifically through the practice of writing — is not new to those in our field. We’ve been making explicit claims about the function of writing in changing the social and civic world for the last thirty-five years.

But these calls echoed over such a long period make visible a sad truth: we are not much closer to understanding how *exactly* our writing classrooms fulfill a social or civic function than we were when we first started to make those claims. I argue we can explain

this lack of progress in part because, for the last thirty-five years, we've relied almost solely on Material and Discursive views of access. And in relying primarily on the Material and Discursive as a means to access, we have often done so in ways specific *to universities*. For example, on creating a pedagogical solution that will transform our citizenry, Gilyard states, "Students will need to engage in discussions of culture, ideology, hegemony, and asymmetrical power relations — all that rugged theoretical terrain that sometimes seems far removed from the texts they are generating in seemingly smooth sites. The whole journey sometimes gets confusing for them and me" (Gilyard 267). I take issue with Gilyard's move to have students read critical social theory — theory generated and produced within the university — as the most crucial means of transforming our public. If we want our students to engage with the public, they need to read and respond to *public forms*. To do so, students might also consider more mainstream texts such as public speeches or op-eds, for example. But also, as I'll suggest throughout this section on Practical access, students would be best served by learning methodologies for engaging in public communities more broadly. Gilyard's response is disappointing, but only because it is all too common. To put it frankly, in matters of considering social *practice* — considering it *really* — we've been quite evasive. All of us.

In his 2010 article, "Seeking New Worlds: The Study of Writing beyond Our College Classrooms," Bronwyn T. Williams writes, "We need to respond more systematically to a world in which the theory and practice of writing and reading increasingly challenge us to recognize the connections between what happens on campus

and what happens in other places and at other stages of life” (130). The challenge to consider what “happens” beyond our classrooms might seem difficult for those who have long worked comfortably in the Discursive, but Williams’ challenge is a laudable one. It has been difficult for those in our field to even imagine looking outside of our classrooms and beyond language itself. In order to help us in doing that work — for building up a foundation of ways to think differently — I will draw from some literature that singles out social practice to develop a sense of what Practical access might look like in our field today.

Drawing on practice theory⁷ (the work of Pierre Bourdieu, in particular), as well as on Adam Banks’ “experiential” and “critical” dimensions of access, I propose that *Practical access* is primarily achieved through participating in shared customs, norms, codes, behaviors, rituals, and interactions. Practical access emphasizes the *activities* that make up access in everyday communities. To view a visual representation of the relationship between Practical access and the other forms, see “Diagram 1: Forms of Access”:

⁷ Practice Theory, the theory I am drawing on, is much more heavily utilized by sociologists, linguists, and anthropologists whose work necessitates looking into the social sphere (See, for example, the work of Erving Goffman or Anthony Giddens).

Diagram 1:

Forms of Access

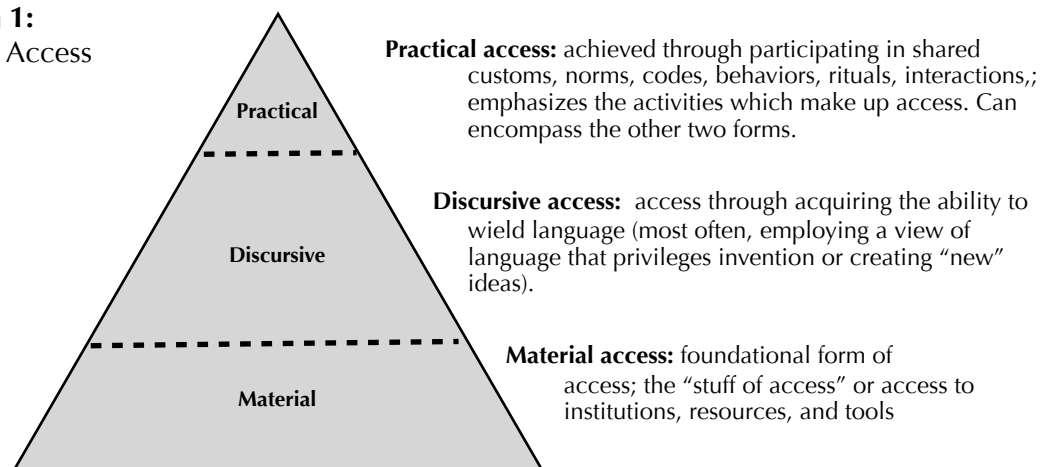


Diagram 1 depicts Practical access atop a triangle representing the three forms. I intend this to indicate that Practical access is a kind of umbrella term, encompassing elements of the previous two forms, but transcending them. The permeable lines on Diagram 1, then, indicate that as we move up the triangle, more base-level forms of access are enveloped by the form above. For example, it would be unlikely for a student to achieve fluency in academic discourse (Discursive access) without first gaining access to an institution of higher-education (Material access). While Practical access includes (and requires, even) aspects of the previous forms, its inherent link to the practical everyday-ness of communities makes this form of access unique⁸. Unlike the Material and Discursive forms that tend to offer us static glances at our social and civic lives, the Practical form of access is messier, and therefore fuller and more dynamic. It is capable of addressing Williams’ call for considering the “... connections between what happens on campus and what happens in other places and at other stages of life” (130).

⁸ The diagram also attempts to reflect the relative weight we’ve assigned to each form of access in our field. Material access has a smaller portion of our attention, but a solid base nonetheless. Discursive access is clearly the thickest portion, and has accounted for most of our field’s scholarship. And we’ve paid far less attention to Practical access at the top. Although we have certainly claimed to value the social and civic, our pedagogies don’t seem to reflect valuing of this direct form of access (as we have favored the Discursive as a stand-in for the Practical).

It is important to stress that because “practice” forges links between texts, communities, and activities, it necessitates moving outside our classrooms and universities in ways that the other forms of access do not. Before further developing the concept of Practical access, though, we must first address in the next section a central problem with this form of access. Because of the ways in which Discourse has been collapsed into social practice in our field, we aren’t sure exactly what Practical access looks like. I am not suggesting here that we can divorce language from the Practical, or the contexts of our communities. Rather, I’m simply stating that because we have become too accustomed to addressing the messiness of the Practical always through language, that it would benefit us to attempt to hold these terms apart temporarily, so that we can best understand how they come together. The next section will first try to (temporarily) disentangle the Discursive from the Practical, and the following section will offer some loose and preliminary theoretical guidelines for beginning to think about the Practical in our field.

Disentangling the Practical from the Discursive: A Necessary First Step

Despite repeated claims that the writing classroom has potential to transform social structure, we have relegated social practice itself to the margins of our field. From a glance at some of the most prominent Discourse scholars, we can easily see claims that extend Discourse beyond language or code and out into the social and civic sphere. In “Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics,” James Paul Gee, for example, discusses extending the scope of language and literacy studies as a means of enveloping social practice. He

states, “the focus of literacy studies or applied linguistics should not be language, or literacy, but social practices” (525). While Gee’s argument is for extending our attention beyond language or literacy itself, our field (much of Gee’s work included) addresses social practice *always through Discourse*. In fact, Gee defines the term “Discourse” in ways that encompass the entire realm of social practice. He writes, “Discourses are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes” (526). While there is nothing odd about Gee’s move to do this (in other words, Gee was making the same argument as many other Discourse scholars of the time), by incorporating elements of interaction (i.e. gestures, body positions, clothes) into his definition of “Discourse,” Gee is collapsing the Discursive with the social practice. The Discursive is not seen as one among many forms of social practice attended to in our field, rather, it comes to be a stand-in for social practice itself. While Gee’s intention is likely to afford attention to the importance of what I’m calling the “Practical,” the consequence of definitions like Gee’s have led us to focus on Practice *only in relation to language*, or *only through language*. Theoretically then, moves like the one Gee makes above are laudable in their attempt to account for the relationship between language and the social. However, I argue here that because of our long history of privileging Discourse, it will serve us well to attempt to (momentarily) disentangle these concepts as a means of arguing for an extended focus on the realm of social practice as it extends beyond language.

Of course, literacy scholars like Gee are not the only ones collapsing the Discursive with the Practical, melding writing and social practice into one. This has been an increasingly wide-spread trend across our literature, perhaps dating back to the Linguistic Turn. Roz Ivanič states the following, “I have learned that it is important to see writing as a social practice, embedded in social relations within a specific community, each with its own complex ideological and conventional practices within which individual students have to find identities as writers that they feel confident and comfortable with” (5). Here, Ivanič defines writing as “social practice” and goes on to link the practice of writing to locating identity within a particular community. I want to emphasize here that while it is true that writing can indeed be *a* social practice, equating writing as an automatic way of considering concepts like “community” or “identity” can be overreaching. When a student sits down to write, they might consider communities and their own identities, but those individual “social” considerations stop short of a kind of participation and response to the social. They do not offer our students chances at achieving the richness of Practical access, not really.

Like Gee and Ivanič, genre theorist Charles Bazerman makes a similar claim about genres and the social. Bazerman states, “Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action” (19). Once again, we see the common claim that the textual extends far beyond the text itself. Here, genres are “forms of life” and “frames for social action.” It is clear that Gee, Ivanič, and Bazerman employ the social sphere as a means of emphasizing the important social work of language. But the extension of language not only *into* the realm of the social, *but as the*

social itself, has allowed those in our discipline to continue to safely embed our claims about the social and civic sphere within language. But this leaves us unacquainted with the social itself. And it certainly leaves us unprepared to address it.

Given everything that the Discursive has encapsulated, the fact that our field has so heavily privileged language — or the Discursive form of access — is no real surprise⁹. After the early 1980s, when language was already well-established as a stand-in for the social, we can see that the site of language becomes appealing as grounds for making all kinds of claims. However, in trying to establish a better sense of Practical access, we need to start by acknowledging that Discourse — while inherently tied to the social — is *not the totality of* the social itself. While Discourse may be *one* form of social practice, it is necessarily a limited form. And if we truly want our students to carefully consider the fullness of the Practical — and to foster Practical access in our classrooms — then we need to be careful to hold the Discursive and the Practical apart. Or at least, we need to hold these two apart so that we can revive the Practical and develop a more nuanced understanding of how the Discursive and Practical overlap, intersect, contradict, and so forth.

Getting the “Practice” Back in the Practical: Agency in the Social and Civic Spheres

It’s time to seriously consider what a Practical approach might look like. A

Practical approach to access in our field views social practice — embodied behaviors,

⁹ Such a clear emphasis on language in our field might be linked back to a delayed influence of the Linguistic Turn, where language was often equated with the social itself, it enacted and performed the social. Nor is it surprising that we came, during that same period, to focus so heavily on invention or the “new,” as Critical Theory gained increasing momentum during this same time.

customs, interactions, codes, rituals etc. — as the site for gaining access and for making social change. In order to consider the Practical in all of its complexity, we need to do a better job of considering the nuances of social *life* in and beyond the academy. For example, instead of asking students to write about social theory, I often ask them to observe their lives within the communities they inhabit for several days, and then to write about something that angers, frightens, excites, encourages, or worries them. After making these initial observations and crafting essays, I then ask them to respond to their communities about these concerns. (In the past, this assignment has taken the form of letters to local grocery stores about GMOs, posts in community newspapers about recycling, and notecards on the tables of restaurants about food waste¹⁰). To foster Practical access in our classrooms in order to help students move beyond our universities, I propose that we need to first shift how we conceive of the role of the individual and necessarily shift how we understand individual agency.

To date, many of our central pedagogies promoting access have relied on a Critical concept of agency (the individual agent coming-to-consciousness). While the Material and Discursive forms of access in our field are distinct in where they locate the sites of access, these forms of access have historically shared many theoretical premises about agency. In rhetoric and composition at least, the Material and the Discursive forms of access share an important relationship to Expressivism and Critical pedagogy (and, more distantly, to Critical theory itself). As discussed in the previous section, this has led

¹⁰ In Chapter 4 I will elaborate on such assignments in much greater detail.

us to often theorize access in ways centered around an individual coming to “critical consciousness” in order to make the “new” or make social change.

The model of the Critical agent has been embedded in our field for quite some time now. For example, Cy Knoblauch states that the agenda of critical pedagogy is to help students see and analyze the assumptions they make. Once students have recognized these assumptions, they have developed a “critical consciousness” and can therefore make changes to their own lives (Knoblauch 1991). Like Knoblauch, Bruce Herzberg legitimizes the need for critical pedagogy when he states, “Students will not critically question a world that seems natural, inevitable, given; instead, they will strategize about their position within it. Developing a social imagination makes it possible not only to question and analyze the world, but also to imagine transforming it” (317). Both Knoblauch and Hertzberg describe students who, through critical analysis of conditions (and especially texts), gain a truer, more “critical” sense of the world and can therefore access an ability to make changes to it. What this theoretical model of agency does, then, is position the individual agent as someone who must *willfully and consciously* come to exercise her or his agency. The Critical model of the agent that we see embedded in assumptions about access focuses on the “self” and that self’s relation (through analysis) to texts and (very vaguely) social contexts as means of opening the doors (either by gaining the necessary Material resources for one’s self or others or through acquiring the appropriate codes to do transformative social work).

By considering practice theory in the paragraphs below, I propose that Practical access can provide us with a more fitting role of the less-than-always-conscious social

agent, one necessary to thoroughly explore the social. If we can establish a shifted sense of agency, I believe that we stand a better chance of developing Practical access in our classrooms and a better chance of extending our attention out into our social and civic spheres primarily. It is crucial to note that the role of the agent in Practice theory is much often less, well, agentive. But prescribing less social power to the consciousness of individuals is, ironically what will allow us to use this theory as a way of freeing up our pedagogies in order to help our students roam the social.

In *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Pierre Bourdieu suggests that “practice” is the dialectic between “objectification” and “incorporation” (72). Bourdieu defines practice as the relationship between our structured environments (i.e. “objectification”) and our structured dispositions (i.e. “incorporation”). In other words, our structured environments become embodied, which then leads us to reproduce aspects of such environments through our interactions. Bourdieu, unlike many of the Critical theorists, does not see much room for radical kinds of social change. Instead of taking up the radical possibilities of the “new” through a transformed consciousness, at heart Bourdieu is interested in “reproduction,” or the ways social structures are held steady through interaction (Bourdieu 1980). This focus on the transactions between individual and social structure makes it impossible for social agents (or students) to break free of such structures (which is the goal of Critical pedagogy). Instead, in Practice theory, there is always a relationship between the individual and the existing social structure, even when that social structure is in the process of shifting. To put this theoretical distinction most simply, in Expressivist and Critical models, individual agency is rooted in breaking free

of social structure completely to make something radically new. However, in Practice theory, agency is exercised from internal transactions, more conservative shifts between the individual and the conventions of the structure already in place. It is the recognition of convention and structure and the transactional nature between these structures and social change (through the individual) that I find compelling and useful in moving us past invention-based models, which I'll return to later.

One central way in which we see the transaction between social structure and individual disposition, according to Bourdieu, is through the concept of the “habitus” (171). The *habitus* gives us a way of understanding how an individual body acts in the social world. Conversely, it gives us a sense of how the world acts through individual bodies. Bourdieu describes the *habitus* as follows:

The *habitus* is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification of these practices. It is in the relationship between the two capacities which define the *habitus*, the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste), that the represented social world, i.e., the space of life-styles, is constituted ... The *habitus* is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes. Each class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of

class conditions, which is also a system of ... differences, differential positions, i.e., by everything which distinguishes from what it is not and especially from everything it is opposed to; social identity is defined and asserted through difference. (171-172)

The role of social structure in embodied interaction described here by Bourdieu diminishes the brand of agency to which we have grown accustomed to in our field. Bourdieu is not calling for an individual to come to consciousness. In fact, the mere description of the habitus suggests that a Critical brand of consciousness is not truly possible (because knowledge, like all else, is always embodied). What is important about the role of the *habitus*, and about Bourdieu's notion of social practice in general, is the way in which it imagines the transaction between individuals and their social structures as moving far beyond the realm of an individual or an individual's interaction with a text (however social that text). Practice is necessarily manifested and reproduced through the body, and because the transaction between "objectification" and "incorporation" is one that is necessarily *about the body*, it is impossible to address these through the Discursive or the Material alone. The Practical, as described by Bourdieu, then, helps us move beyond the idea that we can get at social interaction *merely through the Discursive*, and it also necessarily shifts the way in which we conceive of the role of the individual in the process of gaining access. In Critical models (and Expressivist models, too), the individual agent gains access only through intention or conscious will (through a kind of self-actualization), but Bourdieu's iteration of practice theory gives us a way of understanding the complexity between self and structure so that we might better

acknowledge access as a *consequence* of a broader range of influences such as chance, *kairos*, history, or individual effort and will.

There have certainly been many iterations of practice theory taken up across the social sciences, but for now the nuances of these theories are less important than simply moving in the direction of Practice, of trying our hand at better attending to this aspect of teaching writing. But with this said, I want to turn back to our own field to show how we tend to get tripped up on the notion of Critical consciousness that undergirds much of our theory today. In describing his “dimensions” of access, Adam Banks incorporates two dimensions that specifically attempt to pull our attention beyond the realm of Material and Discursive access and help us to consider the Practical.

In his critique of our field’s focus on Material access when considering concepts like the Digital Divide, Adam Banks posits four “dimensions” of access. The first is Material access which, as I stated earlier, Banks defines as “equality in the material conditions that drive technology use or nonuse” (41-42). However, in order to complicate his notion of the material, Banks proposes three other kinds of access in our field: functional, experiential, and critical access. Functional access is defined as the skills necessary to make productive use of the technology. It often maps onto what I have described above as Discursive access because the skills that Banks defines often relate to skills that are utilized when producing texts. Beyond the Material and Discursive, though, Banks does attempt to include the role of social practice in his model of access. His notion of “experiential access,” or the conditions that render the use of technology as important and relevant in one’s life, attempts to take into account the role of Practice.

However, despite the fact that Banks' model recognizes practice, it holds on firmly to the notion of the critically-conscious agent we see in Expressivism or in Critical pedagogy. In fact, Banks' fourth dimension of access, critical access, reveals the coming-to-consciousness that we see in the previous models. He defines "critical access" as the understanding of the advantages and drawbacks of using technology for a given purpose (Banks 44-46). Banks seems to give a lot of privilege to this fourth kind of access as a means to his umbrella concept of "transformative access." Banks argues that "transformative access" can only be reached if all of the other "dimensions" of access have been achieved.

While Banks has done a great service to our field by outlining ways of viewing access beyond the Material, ultimately I argue that these dimensions of access fall back on a Critical frame. While the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu is by no means exhaustive of how we might consider Practice or Practical access in our field, Bourdieu's sense of the Practical is one that seeks to recognize individual agency as always embodied and beholden to the social structures (which have, in turn, structured it). This makes social structures indisputably most transparent from interactions as they exist in the world, interactions that demand attention as lived and not able to be fully captured by text. So while Banks' dimensions of "experiential" and "critical" access give us some means of thinking about how access *happens*, what we need most is a reminder that much of what happens necessarily occurs outside of the realm of our classrooms and accordingly, outside of the realm of the Discursive. Bronwyn T. Williams offers us one

way of thinking about how we might extend our classes further out into the social. He states:

If the claim of rhetoric and composition is to study student writing, it must be in conversation about how writing happens before and after students step on to university campuses. It is hard to make a serious claim about how pedagogy affects student writing in the brief hours they in the classrooms if it ignores the many hours they spend writing at home and at work, with rapidly evolving online media and technology. Understanding more about the literacy practices in which students engage outside of the classroom or before they reach college (or practices in which they may engage after college) complicate and benefit our research and our teaching. (Williams 133)

Here, Williams proposes that we extend our attention as writing teachers further into space and time. What might such approaches look like in practice? What kinds of assignments would students produce? How would this approach shift our learning objectives? Admittedly, this form of Practical access seems like new and uncharted territory. But I suggest that because we have had such high hopes for the social and civic possibilities of our writing classrooms, we simply need better, more generative ways of getting there. In the next part of this chapter, I delve back into our history to demonstrate my portal model of access, but in the final part of this chapter, I develop a sense of how we might achieve Practical access, and there I extend my discussion of Practical agency.

PART 3: The Portals of Access

The Practical form of access is often an uncomfortable approach for writers. This is because Practice necessarily extends beyond the scope of the written or spoken word. Naturally, as teachers of writing, we have been far more at ease with the Discursive. However, a Practical approach to access is crucial if we truly wish to see our classrooms as capable of fostering access within lived communities beyond the university. We need to acknowledge how writing specifically intersects with Practice if we wish our thinking about access to be round, applicable, and more than just lip-service to some long-standing social ideal in our literature. But the problem we face is this: How do we foster access *really* beyond the university if we teach writing classes nestled within it? I suggest that we might address this dilemma by adopting what I call the “portal” model of access, a model of access that considers the *activities* one does to gain access and, most importantly, how those activities can be transferred from context to context.

Access isn’t often something we have or don’t. It’s messier than that. To deal with that messiness, theories of access in our field have often defined “forms,” “types,” “kinds,” or “varieties” of access to help to break down or fragment the concept. Earlier, I proposed three forms of access: the Material, the Discursive, and the Practical. And as we saw in Adam Banks’ work, Banks posits that access has five dimensions. In all of our most popular models, access is something that one can attain; it’s a noun, and however nuanced that noun, it’s still acquirable. While views of access-as-noun have taken us so far, they ultimately constrain the ways we can look at the practices in our classrooms and how we see those practices — individually and cumulatively — fostering broader kinds

of social and civic access. With access-as-noun models, our pedagogies are deemed to foster access (or not). They are working toward some broad, vague sense of what acquiring access might mean, rather than looking at how particular activities or practices position one to do particular kinds of work (which may then afford access in specific ways or in specific contexts).

I'm interested in how what we do in our classrooms as a means to fostering access might be looked at in a more nuanced way with the "portal" model of access. Instead of forms of access, portals are places in our field that are linked to access through a specified action or activity. I will propose two portals that have been in service throughout the history of our field: 1) the *inventional portal*, which allows us to gain access through inventing new Materials or (especially) Discourse; and 2) the *conventional portal*, which allows us to gain access through working with/in or negotiating existing conventions. By viewing access according to the "portals" model, we can achieve more specificity when considering *how* and *where* we believe our students gain access within and outside of our writing classrooms. What activities does access necessitate?

In addition to providing us with a more nuanced way of viewing access through activities within our classroom, I believe the portal approach will be useful in revealing an interesting historical shift in our scholarship. The vast majority of our current pedagogical approaches to access heavily privilege the inventional portal. We have come to believe if one learns how to work inventively (namely through Discourse) she will gain access to being able to do things with those codes outside of our classrooms. To put this

differently, if students can craft “new” kinds of identities, voices, and ideas within their texts, we have believed those “new” ideas, identities, and voices represent a “new” sense of the social, will be transferred onto our social and civic scenes. But what we seem to have forgotten is that this invention-based narrative about access has in fact supplanted an earlier (and seemingly contradictory narrative). We once believed that it was the conventional portal which provided pathways to social and civic access.

Reviewing these portals will allow us to specifically consider what actions or avenues we have long believed make access — in all of its complexity — possible. Most importantly, I argue that understanding access through a portals approach might help us to craft curriculums that better reach our field’s social and civic goals, and help us to provide our students opportunities to achieve Practical access.

The Inventional Portal: Our Current Access-Narrative

Stories about our past are most dangerous when they become so cemented as truth that we forget to tell them; we forget that they — like all stories — are fictions. The story of inventional access in our field has achieved such a status. We have so thoroughly become convinced that invention is *the* means to access, and evidence of this trend surrounds us in almost every facet of work in our field. In Part 2 of this chapter, I traced the way that invention intersected theories of Discursive access. There, I showed several bodies of scholarship where inventing or creating the “new” with language dominated our thinking. While I won’t rehash that material here, I will discuss some specific practices that further evidence of what I call the inventional portal. I will argue that we’ve

privileged invention and recognized access as stemming from invention and the creation of the new in our classrooms.

Invention has always been present in rhetorical theory and practice. It is, after all, the first of the rhetorical canons. But within our contemporary context, invention has been especially hard to ignore; it has been ubiquitous since the 1980s. In “Toward a Modern Theory of Rhetoric,” Richard Young and Alton Becker state, “The strength and worth of rhetoric seem [. . .] to be tied to the art of invention; rhetoric tends to become a superficial and marginal concern when it is separated from systematic methods of inquiry and problems of content” (127). Here, Young and Becker reflect the current relationship between invention in the field of rhetoric and composition. Invention is not seen as merely one among five rhetorical canons. Rather, it has become a stand-in for rhetoric itself. Without invention, rhetoric is “superficial” and “marginal.” Invention, we might say from our current perspective, is the magic “stuff” of rhetoric. And over the last several decades, we have been so taken with invention that we have often forgotten to look beyond it.

In her book *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition*, Janice Lauer accounts for the role of invention throughout various stages in history and within our pedagogies. Lauer’s book project is reflective of the canon’s status in our field. But in Lauer’s discussion of invention during the 1980s through today, she states something of particular importance. Lauer notes that the various invention-based critical and social theories have dispersed our attention. That is, during the 1980s through the new millennium, Lauer writes that:

... studies of invention migrated to many sites, including writing in the disciplines and the rhetoric of inquiry. Larger theoretical movements also influenced studies of invention. The rise of social construction, deconstruction, poststructuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies challenged conceptions of writers' agency, individual invention, certainty and the advisability of general strategies. These theories posited multiple writer positions, writers written by language, social conceptions of invention, the importance of local knowledge, discourse communities, and the role of readers and culture in inventional acts. Theorists also foregrounded the hermeneutical, interpretive, and critical purposes of invention while previous theories of invention were modified. (Lauer 96)

Lauer explains here that while our focus on invention continues from the 1980s and through today, the diversity of approaches to invention has made it less recognizable. While the various brands of invention in "social construction, deconstruction, poststructuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies" diverge slightly in how they conceive of theoretical nuances (such as agency, for example), these theories share a heavy privileging of invention. While those in our field might debate whether or not our pedagogies should be framed from a social constructionist perspective or with postmodern theories, then, we are ultimately always choosing between theories that privilege invention. If what Lauer writes is true, then in today's theoretical landscape in our field, it seems as though framing our thinking in ways that move beyond invention will be difficult.

In the previous sections on the influences of Expressivism and Critical pedagogy in Part 2, I discussed how invention had specifically influenced us in working with micro-level language conventions (valuing alternative grammars, or Discourses), and how such invention-based pedagogies had impacted, for example, our work with genre-based pedagogies or new media work today (in that we are always framing the value of new media for its ability to produce the new). However, I want to turn to a description of a discussion in a writing course based on theories of invention to demonstrate what such a course might feel like for a student sitting in the classroom. In their article, “Invention, Composition, and the Urban College,” Michael Paull and Jack Kligerman describe the classroom practices that stem from invention-based pedagogies, pedagogies that reject convention and hold up discovery, creativity, student-centered learning, and the production of the “new.” Paull and Kligerman write:

This course was not always a comfortable one for the students or for us. Because we tried to stay out of the class discussions as much as possible, there were often long silences while the students waited for us to direct them, to tell them what to do or to tell them if they were doing the right thing. We did not respond to these silences; we felt that, for the course to work, the students had to be responsible for understanding and coping with such situations. They seemed to do both admirably, learning that much can be gained from silence and that it does not necessarily indicate a void or a vacuum. They saw that silence is filled by many gestures which are often more revealing than words. The class was initially disturbed that we would not tell them the purpose of a particular exercise. They

often walked away at the end of the period muttering "What have we done this hour?" To compound the problem, we also refused to say whether their responses in class were right or wrong. They continually pleaded with us to tell them if they had given the right answer. Slowly they began to understand that we were not looking for answers as they understood them. With the exercises and the journals, we attempted to present situations in which the students could discover the way in which they perceived and structured their own experiences. If such a discovery were made, they would realize that they were the best judges of whether their answers were correct or not. (659)

In their own description of this pedagogy, Paull and Kligerman mention silence, muttering, and discomfort. They seem to view these student responses as valuable and necessary in the process of discovering and learning. Discovery and inventing knowledge, for these students, was yielded through the rejection of conventional or normative classroom interaction where the teacher constructed a plan with set outcomes or objectives in mind. While this course described above was taught by Paull and Kligerman several decades ago, it seems to closely echo values advocated and enacted in the contemporary composition classroom today. Only by inventing "whether their answers were correct or not" could students truly learn.

In the course of the chapter, I have focused on a variety of issues, topics, and modes that have emerged in the composition classroom. In our approaches to grammar, genre, new media, and classroom discussion I have demonstrated that we see the site that students gain access as stemming from invention, or the making of the new. One

interesting example that further evidences our focus on invention and foreshadows the way in which we've used new media in our field is the treatment of narrative form during the 1990s and throughout the early part of the new century. In positing the use of narrative and other alternative forms, Lillian Bridwell Bowles states the following, "Our language and our written texts represent our visions of our culture, and we need new processes and forms if we are to express ways of thinking that have been outside the dominant culture" (Bridwell Bowles 349).

Collections of such work in our field such as *Narration as Knowledge: Tales of the Teaching Life* edited by Joseph Trimmer or *Women/Writing/Teaching*, edited by Jan Zlotnik Schmidt, are written to encourage the use of narrative form for critical, social transformational work within our classrooms. The editors and authors of these collections claim that narrative form somehow moves around or escapes the privilege inherently linked with the conventions of academic discourse. Consider, for example, how Trimmer's project is marketed on the back of his book:

Here for the first time is a work in which *eloquence is the vehicle for conveying theory and practice*. This collection does not follow the *sanctioned procedures* of educational research. Nor is it written in the *privileged forms of academic discourse*. Instead, it *plays with all the devices of storytelling*—scene, dialogue, point of view — exploring a new way to report crucial information on the teaching and learning of English. (Trimmer back cover; emphasis mine)

Here, narrative functions as a way around "privileged forms of academic discourse" and it does this through "using eloquence as a vehicle" and "play[ing] with the devices of

storytelling;” yet, throughout the entire body of narrative work in rhetoric and composition, there is little to no attention to how the forms or features of these narratives achieve their stated critical projects through this “play.” Accordingly, where any justification regarding the critical function of these narratives takes place, it is always in relation to the content-based projects taken on within the narratives. More specifically, these texts heavily privilege the ways in which the content of these narratives critically situate teachers and students in relation to one another and the institutions within which they work. Consider a later passage about Trimmer’s project denoting the critical work that these narratives do and linking that only to content:

In this beautifully written gathering, the narrators ... do not see themselves as heroes. They know that the classroom is an exciting but uncertain place. No one, not even the teacher in charge, understands all of the subtle assumptions and slippery assertions enacted in the daily exchange of information. And so these narrators try to spin “true” stories about the partiality of their knowledge and the vulnerability of their power. Their tales, while engaging and insightful, are not exotic [The tales] braid the reading and writing present in any English classroom with the culture that shapes teacher and student lives. (Trimmer back cover; emphasis mine)

Despite the earlier claim, then, that narrative form works around the privilege of academic discourse, we see here that these narratives are seen as “critical” not because of the nuanced ways they utilize form to do this work (this is never fully explained beyond the fact that narrative isn’t as bound up in privilege), but because they position teachers

and students in ways that allow them to acknowledge the “partiality of their knowledge and the vulnerability of their power” within “the culture that shapes teacher and student lives.” My point here is that although there is some emphasis on narrative form as an almost inherently critical tool that is somehow less tied to privilege than academic discourse, critical content trumps careful attention to form in this work and, by extension, we lose sight of how we might manipulate and negotiate form toward, and in connection with, producing the “critical.”

Within this chapter, I have argued that the pervasiveness of invention and “newness” within the field is unescapable. Earlier in the chapter, I demonstrated that this privileging is evident in many facets of how we work with language and the production of texts. We have moved away from teaching grammar or language conventions

The Conventional Portal: An Old, Long-Forgotten Story

In the field of rhetoric and composition today, the phrase “conventional portal of access” might seem contradictory. Often (but wrongly) set in opposition with invention, I will demonstrate here that conventions are often thought to be rote, to stifle creativity and invention, and thus maintain the status quo. From the perspective of many in our field today, conventions are thought to foreclose access. In fact, as I’ll discuss further in Chapter 2, the success of the inventional portal is often predicated on the simultaneous dismissal of convention.

During the turn toward Expressivist and Critical pedagogies, Jackson Burgess described this turn away from convention. He states, “Conventions will not suffice, and a

great deal of mischief is done by teachers who think that they will” (Burgess 258).

Increasingly, Burgess goes on to describe how those in our field should turn away from convention-based models. Here I will draw on some of the literature from earlier days in our field, as well as work influenced by genre studies, to show that composing by considering and negotiating convention has been — *and can be today* — a place of achieving access. Unlike our common access narrative today, the conventional portal of access offers students opportunities to achieve access through working with/in and negotiating convention.

While a turn toward convention often did not sit easily with Expressivist and Critical pedagogies, conventions were *sometimes* recognized as valuable for the role they played in social change. As the below quote from Rich Heyman will show, certain more liberal brands of Critical pedagogy did not dismiss convention altogether; instead, they saw convention as valuable in service of producing the “new.” In Heyman’s quote, we see convention’s value in its ability to “reshap[e] and revis[e]” our communities. He writes:

Students who attain a self-conscious literacy in academic discourse — a knowledge not merely of the conventions of that discourse, but an understanding that they are conventions of a particular community which shape and constitute the knowledge produced by that community, and which are subject to reshaping and revision — are in a far better position to fashion their own understandings of the world out of the various discourses they encounter. (Heyman 146)

While conventions in and of themselves are seen as inadequate here by Heyman, considering the ways that conventions constitute community and can thereby be used to

reshape and revise such communities is seen as important. In other words, from the Critical perspective that Heyman writes, conventions are valuable in their ability to (eventually) produce the “new” or foster invention. While convention is not directly a portal to access here, it is not discounted in our students’ pathways to access.

The New London Group, drawing heavily on genre studies, takes a similar approach toward convention. As I discussed in the previous section, many pedagogies of the time embraced invention at the expense of all else in the composing process. However, genre-based pedagogies took an approach that assigned convention a significant role in the process of social change. In *Multiliteracies: Literacy and the Design of Social Futures*, these theorists proposed the notion of “Available Designs,” or the resources for Design that “include[d] the ‘grammars’ of various semiotic systems: the grammars of languages, and the grammars of other semiotic systems such as film, photography, or gesture” (23). The New London group believed that the grammars of “Available Designs” could be taught to students. In other words, students could learn these Designs (or conventions) in order to transform their social circumstances, and eventually, the social world. They describe this process as follows, “Listeners and readers encounter texts as Available Designs. They also draw upon their experience of other Available Designs as a resource for making new meanings from the texts they encounter” (24). By using Available Designs as a means to “Redesign,” or make conventions anew, The New London Group believed that we could strive toward a more egalitarian society. They write, “An authentically democratic new vision of schools must include a vision of meaningful success for all; a vision of success that is not defined exclusively in economic terms and

that has embedded within it a critique of hierarchy and economic injustice” (New London Group 13). Through the process of re-crafting community through altering convention, genre theorists believed that we could transform our society. Their pedagogy was motivated by the belief that, “Students need also to develop the capacity to speak up, to negotiate, and to be able to engage critically with the conditions of their working lives” (New London Group 13). The process of acquiring and altering Available Designs as means of transforming the social centralizes the role of convention in the process of social change. Yet, it is important to point out that this view ultimately leaves convention beholden to the power of invention; convention itself does not yield access, but one can gain access by learning convention in order to produce the “new.”

In both Heyman (writing from a Critical pedagogical perspective) and in the work of The New London Group we see convention as a step in our path toward access, but not convention as a portal to access itself. However, the views of convention throughout the 1980s and 1990s were not always quite as generous. For example, we see a lot of anxiety over convention, and a significant degree of hesitancy about clinging too tightly to the role of convention in our classrooms. In this seminal article “The Study of Error,” David Bartholomae writes the following about the relationship between basic writers and textual convention:

All writing, of course, could be said to only approximate conventional discourse; our writing is never either completely predictable or completely idiosyncratic. We speak our own language as well as the language of the tribe and, in doing so, make concessions to both ourselves and our culture. The

distance between text and conventional expectation may be a sign of failure and it may be a sign of genius, depending on the level of control and intent we are willing to assign to the writer, and depending on the insight we acquire from seeing convention so transformed. For a basic writer the distance between text and convention is greater than it is for the run-of-the-mill freshmen writer. It may be, however, that the more talented the freshman writer becomes, the more able she is to increase again the distance between text and convention. We are drawn to conclude that basic writers lack control, although it may be more precise to say that they lack choice and option, the power to make decisions about the idiosyncrasy of their writing. (254)

Here Bartholomae acknowledges that when we write, we are always necessarily vacillating between invention (or what he calls idiosyncrasy) and convention; yet, Bartholomae suggests that we often judge the “idiosyncracies” of basic writers as “errors,” while we attribute the idiosyncracies of more fluent writers as “talent.” In his work, Bartholomae cautions us about responding to the “errors” of basic writers, as he argues that the concept of “error” often indexes social proximity to power and privilege. Bartholomae makes an important point; however, his argument makes it difficult to value the necessity of convention in the composing process. By viewing convention as something that primarily functions to bind writers to power and privilege, it is easy to forget the role of convention in communicating with others and sustaining community.

Bartholomae’s point on “error” was especially resonant in the basic writing scholarship on grammar. But Martha Kolln takes a different view on the role of

grammatical convention. Kolln takes an adamant stance against views like Bartholomae's arguing that language conventions are, in fact, teachable. She writes:

Not only can we teach grammar-the internalized system of rules that the speakers of a language share-we can do so in a functional way, in connection with composition. When we teach our students to understand and label the various structures of the system, when we bring to conscious awareness those subconscious rules, we are, in fact, teaching grammar. (Kolln 141)

Kolln goes on to argue that because grammar conventions are teachable, we have a responsibility to teach these to our students. In Kolln's work, we can see the earlier thinking of those in basic writing studies (such as Mina Shaughnessy) echoed: for these scholars, language conventions were not a place for reifying inequality (as they were to Bartholomae). Instead, conventions are the sites where students might gain access. In this view, conventions are not simply a means to enter the inventional portal of access, rather they offer access in and of themselves. By acquiring, negotiating, and responding to conventions, we can access; the conventional portal of access becomes clear.

The move away from convention throughout the 1980s and 1990s prompted a defense of convention launched by Leslie E. Moore and Linda H. Peterson in their article, "Convention as Connection: Linking the Composition Course to the English and College Curriculum." Moore and Peterson detail their view of convention as follows:

An English class that uses "convention," whether it uses the word itself or refers instead of recurrent patterns, common *topoi*, or a literary tradition, assumes, moreover, a broad understanding of what it entails: "convention" goes beyond

mere rules to encompass essential relations of form, content, and audience. This understanding of convention-literally a "coming together," an agreement between writer and reader to observe or draw upon certain features of style, structure, and content. (467)

Here, we can see how convention is tied to a 'coming together.' Unlike a view of convention as at odds with access, then, Moore and Peterson advocate for a version of convention that is inherently about providing students with access to communities. Moore and Peterson go on in their article to posit three principles of convention. Firstly, they state, "Convention assumes a relationship between a writer and readers shaped by shared knowledge" (Moore and Peterson 467). Secondly, "Convention assumes a relationship between a writer and other writers (Moore and Peterson 468). And finally, "Convention assumes a relationship between a writer and a field of written discourse" (468). These principles highlight the ways that convention links writers to others: readers, other writers, and a given field of written discourse. These links, of course, are forms of access in and of themselves.

It is true that conventions have not been a favorite of contemporary pedagogues in our field. However, in the history of rhetoric and composition, there is another narrative about where and how we might gain access. Today, our access narrative depends heavily on invention, and fostering the production of the "new." But in this section I have shown that convention has also historically been believed to play a role in access, and in some cases to be a kind of access in and of itself. In Part 4 of this chapter, I'll propose a third

portal of access that argues both invention and convention are necessary in order to forge a path toward Practical access in our classrooms.

PART 4: Proposing the Third Portal: Considering New Possibilities for Access

We have spent a great deal of time addressing our field's past. In the previous section, I covered the "portals" approach to access, which proposed two competing narratives in the history of our field (invention as a means to access vs. convention as a means to access). This final portion of Chapter 1 will look to the field's future.

As means of taking stock, I first review the potential of both the inventional and conventional portals in achieving Practical access. After suggesting both portals are insufficient, I draw on Carolyn Miller and Marilyn Cooper's notions of "agency" to help me propose the third portal of access: the mediational portal. Before concluding the chapter, I briefly review why new media might be a fruitful area within our field to establish and build upon the concept of the mediational portal as a means of fostering Practical access in the discipline today.

Inventional and Conventional Portals as Gateways to the Practical?

The "portals" approach has allowed us to look at what kinds of activities we have concretely valued as a means to access over time. Here, I want to briefly review both the inventional and the conventional portals to assess their potential to help us consider, reflect, respond, shift, and change our social and civic communities. In other words, how

have each of these respective portals moved us toward fostering Practical Access in our classrooms? Conversely, how has each made it difficult for us to consider access beyond the Material or Discursive?

First, I'll address the inventional portal. As discussed in Part 3A, the inventional portal of access has historically been tightly interwoven with the Discursive form of access. Through inventing within Discourse, we have understood our students to be moving toward making social and civic change. However, the problem with the inventive portal (as seen within Discourse especially) is that it often leaves us without concrete ways to connect to lived communities outside of our classrooms (or even the lived communities beyond language or Discourse itself). We have often encouraged students to invent — to use Discourse in ways “new-to-them” — as a placeholder for interacting and carving out work within the messiness of lived communities. Our focus on invention through language has wedged distance between our students (and the writing we expect them to do) and communities where they live (and nuanced positions they might take in response to those communities). That is, in many of our current pedagogies students aren't required to directly address or respond to anyone. So long as they are using language in inventive ways, we recognize their work as social enough. But is it? Are students writing within contemporary pedagogies (pedagogies which privilege invention through Discourse) in fact doing enough to warrant the strong claims we make about writing instruction as a means of social and civic participation and even change?

Alas, I argue that invention has been hugely insufficient in accomplishing such work. If we are constantly valuing “the new” it is easy for students to skim over the

necessity of considering the conventions of an already-established community. It is easy for students to miss, then, what it means to write to, for, or alongside such a community. To participate. In fact, in curriculums where inventing with language *is* social action, we give our students little motivation to work harder, to do more, to get involved, *really*.

While ironically the inventional portal came into favor as means to encouraging social and civic change (i.e. new language is a viable means to new social realities and social structures), it is fair to say that it has been difficult for students working within invention-based, Discourse-centered pedagogies to enact participation or change within real communities in relation to our classes. This is perhaps because our curriculums don't encourage spending time or gaining awareness in contexts beyond our university; and even when they do (as in the case of service learning, for example), we often don't encourage our students to carefully consider, analyze, and respond to the established conventions of such communities. It's puzzling, then, to hear writing teachers wonder why students have historically struggled with the concept of "audience" in their writing (or why students' writing lacks a sense of a nuanced audience — an audience moving beyond their classmates or teacher, or static social categories like, "I'm writing to women" or "I'm addressing liberals"). In curriculums where "inventing" and "discovering" for one's self is enough, we have little right to claim dissatisfaction when our students don't have a developed sense of the nuances of real people to whom they might *actually* respond. We have little right to feel frustration when they stop, at the level of language, at what is "new-to-them." Many of our central theories and most championed pedagogical models seem to insist that invention *is* sufficient. But if it is the

case that it isn't enough, than we are charged with finding something richer, something that takes us beyond the shiny newness of our students' initial discoveries.

On the other hand, let's reflect on the conventional portal as a means to Practical access. Our field's distant past also suggests trouble with adhering too tightly to convention as *the* means of addressing the social, of achieving Practical access. The conventional portal — unlike many of the charges by Expressivists and Critical Pedagogues — is indeed a legitimate means to access. Yet, the conventional portal gives us far less space to consider more radical changes within a communities. The conventional warrants work within existing structures, but historically it has given us little room to think about how those structures might need to be fundamentally altered, significantly reshaped, or even replaced all together. Similar to the critiques of genre work often made by followers of Critical pedagogy, focusing on convention might help us gain initial entry into a community, but it does not necessarily lend us agency to maintain that membership, let alone to shift and change the community itself. The conventional portal — while far more important to a broader definition of access than we've given it credit for in recent decades — is also insufficient, then, as the *solely* viable portal for Practical access. And the conventional portal could be viewed as inadequate for fostering dynamic social change.

In sum, despite the prominence of the inventional portal of access in our field today, we have precedent in our field for *two* distinct portals of access. The problem is that neither of these portals have been very successful at drawing our attention toward a Practical form of access in rich, sustained ways. The best evidence of the failure of either

portal to provide sustainable pathways to Practical access is that we are still producing paper after paper, article after article, book after book making calls for an increased attention to Practical access (Gilyard 2010; Williams 2010). While we have been successful in making small strides toward Material and Discursive access (with the inventional and conventional portals), the Practical remains quite elusive. The Practical is the form of access that gives us most trouble. And it is the form we seem to covet most.

As we transitioned between which portal we relied upon most heavily in our field — when the inventional portal slowly supplanted the conventional — we lost something of great value. We lost the chance to levy convention with invention. Or put differently, we lost a chance at a balanced approach to access, an approach that recognizes the importance of convention *and* invention, invention *through* convention, establishing convention *alongside* invention, etc. I argue that it's precisely the relationship between invention and convention, the vacillation between these two activities, that will create the most expedient and effective portal to Practical access. While the conventional and inventional portals have helped us achieve Material and Discursive access (in one way or another), Practical access demands something more complex. Practical communities — and especially helping young people figure out what it means to participate and gain a voice in such communities — demand attention to *both* conventions and invention.

The Mediational: Defining a Third Portal

Because we have yet to find adequate ways of concretely fostering Practical access in our classrooms, I want to propose a third portal of access. I believe if this third

portal can help us craft new narratives about access in our field, we stand a better chance at consciously designing pedagogies in ways that make this portal visible and, in turn, make Practical access a more attainable goal.

I want to call this third portal the “mediational portal.” The mediational portal of access helps us gain access through the constant negotiation and fluctuation between working with/in convention and with invention as an attempt at communicating. In other words, mediational access “mediates” between invention and convention always in relation to audience (and for a given, situated purpose). We might also say, then, that this portal of access “mediates” between the individual and the social, or between the act of an individual sitting down to compose in response to social conventions for a particular and situated audience and purpose.

The mediational portal of access acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of both invention and convention. However, in the case of this portal, the sum is greater than its parts. The mediational portal is inherently better suited for encouraging social and civic engagement because it demands that students consider and negotiate between convention and invention as a means of *attempting* to communicate. Unlike the inventional portal (where composers are automatically seen as accessing “new” social structures through utilizing language in “new” ways) or the conventional portal (where composers are seen to gain guaranteed access to existing communities of privilege through successfully adopting conventions), the mediational portal is unique in that it does not guarantee efficacy. The mediational does not guarantee access for every visitor to the portal, but instead insists that access is something we gain through a process of

building and crafting texts that may come to effectively mediate between invention and convention in order to communicate something.

As a means of sketching out what mediational access might look like, I propose we consider a shift in how the concept of agency is imagined in our field. Many of our theories on agency from the 1980s and 1990s certainly centered around a mostly-conscious, individual agent often acting intentionally — we might think of this as an agent who has gained what Bizzell refers to as “critical consciousness” (1992). This kind of conscious, intentional, and effective agency is at the center of both the conventional and inventional portals to access. The composer needs to consciously (and with control) wield convention as a means to access in the former, and consciously be willing to invent or make “new” as means of gaining access through the latter. The sense of agency ascribed to writers in both cases, however, is simply too strong. It fails to take into account how sometimes wielding particular convention *doesn't* guarantee access, just as sometimes making “new” within Discourse doesn't necessarily shift social structure. The extent to which we've ascribed agency to writers doing the “right” activities in our classrooms has allowed us to make strong claims about the broader social and civic function of our classrooms. But if those claims are false (or overly strident) — and I believe they are — then we are doing our students a great disservice by believing that they have gained “access” when, in fact, they have not. Moreover, they have not learned the more nuanced skills for attempting to do so. In developing the mediational portal, it is necessary to utilize a more dicey brand of agency in relation to composing.

Recent scholarship has called some of the power of the individually-acting agent into question. Carolyn Miller (2007), for example, suggests that agency is performative in that it relies upon the *interaction* between an agent and *her audience*. Agency, for Miller, has a “double quality” that consists of two main properties: capacity and effect. It is the second part of Miller’s definition — efficacy — that is most dismissive of the individually-acting agent. By highlighting the agent’s reliance on the world around her, suddenly her efficacy depends upon her audience as well as the constraints of the social, kairotic moment.

Miller’s sense of agency helps us build in the concept of social interaction, but it holds onto a sense of consciousness and intentionality, which Marilyn Cooper’s definition of “rhetorical agency” mitigates. Cooper states:

We have for a long time understood an agent as one who through conscious intention or free will causes changes in the world. But I suggest that neither conscious intention nor free will — at least as we commonly think of them — is involved in acting or bringing about change: though the world changes in response to individual action, agents are very often not aware of their intentions, they do not directly cause changes, and the choices they make are not free from influence from their inheritance, past experiences, or surroundings ... individuals ... do have conscious intentions and goals and plans; but their agency does not arise from conscious mental acts ... Agency instead is based in individuals’ lived knowledge that their actions are their own. As Jane Bennett suggests, “agency is

the ... capacity to make a difference in the world without knowing quite what you are doing.” (155)

For Cooper then, while intentionality and a consciously acting agent are certainly possible, they are not the “stuff” of agency, and they certainly are not prerequisites to agency’s existence. Whether we are talking about Miller’s agency or Cooper’s “rhetorical agency,” though, one thing is certain: these concepts of agency that diminish individual action as the sole means of social access or change (in the case of Miller), or intentional and conscious action (in the case of Cooper), are interesting given the ways that they pull away from our most current understandings of access. Our understandings of access today often — if not always — hold onto a connection between social actors (or students) as making conscious, intentional choices in their writing (inventing with language or abiding by conventions) as a means to immediately gain entrance in social communities or achieve social mobility and change.

Following Miller and Cooper’s¹¹ notions of agency, I propose that the mediational portal of access should be considered less reliable for our students. We should view this portal of access as more contingent, less of a sure-bet means of gaining access. By viewing students’ efficacy as composers as always “in question,” we are giving ourselves more room to discuss chance, failure, revision, skill, technique, and the dynamic nature that is always tied to the concrete and messy process of composing.

¹¹ I prefer Miller’s concept of agency to Cooper’s concept of “rhetorical agency.” This is because “rhetorical agency” diminishes more of the “capacity” of the composer than I’m comfortable with. It’s not to say that social actors and composers can always or even often consciously will their intentions into being, it’s just that it is useful to hold onto the construct intentionality in our first-year writing curriculums, where the act of teaching writing is easier if students believe they can communicate their intentions.

I propose that the mediational portal of access makes good use of its own name once more in that it “mediates,” too, between what Miller calls “capacity” and “effect.” One’s negotiation between invention and convention *is* in her or his control, but the broader effects of that negotiation are located outside of them and within the larger community to which one responds. By knowing that community well — through interaction and lived experience — composers can gain more control over the “capacity” side of things. However, the effect is always contingent, dynamic. Unlike the inventional and conventional portals in our field which have made strong social and civic promises to access, the potential effect is a chance at access. Nothing more, and surely nothing less.

Because the mediational portal addresses the writing process and its relationship to concrete communities with more complexity and nuance, and accordingly affords us with a sense of agency that is necessarily more contingent and limited, it is a portal of access I feel strongly stands a better chance of fostering Practical access in our writing classrooms. Even if and when Practical access is not achieved through the mediational portal (and there are many times it may not be), at the very least what we have offered our students is a chance at acknowledging the difficulty and messiness of communication as a means of interacting with others. Even in the case of great failures, then, the mediational portal offers our students lessons that will help them persist as writers and thinkers and community members in ways that the inventional and conventional cannot.

Where Do We Locate Mediational Access?: New Media and the Mediational

I have argued that the mediational portal of access is better suited to fostering the Practical access that our field has longed for; however, I have spent significantly less time suggesting where we might begin to do such work. In service of looking to the future, and before the conclusion of this first Chapter, I want to propose that a new media pedagogy — particularly a new media pedagogy that stems from Anne Frances Wysocki’s definition of “new media” — would be a particularly auspicious place for us to begin making the mediational portal visible, thereby developing attempts at Practical access in our classrooms.

Surely, it’s possible to carve out approaches to teaching writing that foster mediational access using a wide array of materials. In fact, later in this project I’m going to argue that approaches in the creative disciplines already operate under such a model (at least, in certain ways). However, it is true that particular texts, classroom activities, discussions, and practices encourage the visibility of the mediational portal more so than others. Because of this, in our field today new media is an area that holds especially high potential for making the mediational portal of access visible.

There are three general reasons new media holds especially high potential for making mediational access visible. While I won’t go into much depth with these here in the first chapter, later in the project I’ll discuss the affordances of new media more specifically. But for now, the reasons that new media makes the mediational portal quite visible are as follows: 1) New media is a place in our contemporary field that we have come to see as rendering access already; 2) The dynamic, shifting, and yet-to-be-codified

nature of many new media texts is especially useful for highlighting the relationship between invention and convention; and 3) New media encourages us to think more complexly about audience, and therefore about what it means to compose for a specific community.

While new media texts, most broadly conceived of, would likely do sufficient work to make the mediational portal visible, Anne Frances Wysocki's concept of new media is especially useful for the mediational portal. Unlike other new media theorists privileging digitality, in "Opening New Media to Writing" Wysocki insists that new media texts "do not have to be digital" (15). Instead, Wysocki defines new media as follows:

I think we should call 'new media texts' those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who then highlight the materiality: such composers design texts that help readers/consumers/viewers stay alert to how any text — like its composers and readers — doesn't function independently of how it is made and in what contexts. Such composers design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they embody. (15)

By highlighting the *range* of materialities here, as well as drawing attention to "how [a text] is made and in what contexts," Wysocki's definition lends itself well to the mediational portal of access (one which depends upon the considering the relationship between the contexts within which one is composing, and how one grapples with the conventions of such a context as a means of generating a response).

Wysocki's definition of "new media" lends us concrete approaches to looking at text that acknowledge both the wide range of choices writers make and how those many choices are still fairly limited or constrained. As composers, then, it is our job to carefully consider the composing task at hand and to consider the community with which we wish to interact. It is then our job to make the best choices we can given that recognitions. On the necessity of considering "positioning" in our writing classrooms Wysocki argues the following:

Because in acknowledging the broad material conditions of writing instruction we then also acknowledge the contingent and necessarily limited structures of writing and writing instruction — people in our classes ought to be producing texts using a wide and alertly chosen range of materials — if they are to see their selves as positioned, as building positions in what they produce. (20)

Wysocki's definition of new media acknowledges here both the process of invention in starting to write and also the way writers must consider conventions, or the "necessarily limited structures of writing and writing instruction" (20). Wysocki acknowledges the broad array of material options for invention *alongside of* the careful consideration of convention is crucially important for "see[ing] [one's self] as positioned, as building positions in what [one] produce[s]" (20). It precisely this material view of new media texts that will be best suited for making the mediational portal of access visible and viable for students. In our contemporary composition classrooms, new media offers us a good opportunity to pave the way to the Practical.

Mediational Access: Looking to the Future, Some Final Remarks

In Chapter 1, I have proposed that despite our field's claims to fostering social and civic change in our writing classrooms, we have too often stopped at the edge of our college campuses. The heavily privileging of the Material and Discursive forms of access in our field has led us to ignore the ways in which our writing classrooms are linked to communities beyond the university. Because of our incessant social and civic claims, we need to be held accountable for developing a stronger, more concrete sense of access rooted in the messiness of social and civic life; we need Practical access. But we can gain Practical access only by moving beyond the understanding of access (and the related pedagogies) that we have relied on for decades. Specifically, I have argued that we need to move beyond asking students to work within Discourse, to use "new" Discursive strategies or language as a means of achieving "new" social structures.

Chapter 1 has, in sum, provided much historical, theoretical context for my argument in our field. Chapter 2 picks up with the present. I argue that we need to make the mediational portal of access more visible in our contemporary curriculums as a means of fostering Practical access. To do this work, I look to the concept of "arrangement" for some past precedent of linking invention to convention. Also, as a means of developing a place for the mediational, I turn to the work on "remix" in the body of scholarship on new media.

CHAPTER 2

Resuscitating Arrangement, Reconsidering Remix: Remarrying Invention & Convention in Our Field Today

Every thing must have a beginning, to speak in Sanchean phrase, and that beginning must be linked to something that went before. The Hindoos give the world an elephant to support it, but they make the elephant stand upon a tortoise. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. In all matters of discovery and invention, even of those that appertain to the imagination, we are continually reminded of the story of Columbus and his egg. Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it. — Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

Shelley’s assertion that a “beginning must be linked to something that went before,” echoes a view of the relationship between invention and convention that I hope to develop throughout this chapter. We don’t “[create] out of void, but out of chaos,” Shelley states, underscoring the relationship between invention and the contexts (and conventions) from which we invent. Chapter 2 recovers and develops theories of arrangement that acknowledge the constant flux between inventing and responding to the existing, chaotic, and always-shifting conventions of our communities. As I demonstrated in the preceding chapter, though, such theories of composing that attend to convention are uneasy in our field, a field that has — for decades — heavily privileged invention over all else. To extend our attention beyond invention in the composing process, and to find ways that carry forward I posit that one place to look is the subsequent rhetorical canon of arrangement¹².

Rhetoricians like Sharon Crowley often define arrangement as “the canon that traditionally deals with the ordering of the parts of a discourse” (55). However, I want to

¹² I am utilizing the model of the rhetorical canons (or “offices”, the terms “canon” and “office” are used interchangeably) that orders them as follows: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Some traditions include a sixth canon or office, judgement, located between invention and arrangement.

push at the boundaries of such definitions of arrangement from the outset of this chapter. According to Patrick Hartwell, one problem with reducing arrangement simply to “organization” or “the ordering of parts” is that these definitions give us little incentive to understand how we might link arrangement to invention (or, I will argue, the rest of the composing process) (549). Hartwell posits that often in our standard definitions of arrangement, we define the term as occurring after or beyond invention; composers organize already-invented content by fitting parts into static forms (or what Hartwell calls “slots to be filled with meaning”) (550). In the majority of our definitions, Hartwell argues that invention is unnecessarily cleaved off from arrangement. To address the problem Hartwell describes, I will develop a new definition of arrangement throughout this chapter. I will begin by suggesting here that arrangement is the dynamic process of shaping or moulding a text for a given audience, and to achieve a particular purpose¹³. The act of arranging always encompasses the vacillation between inventing and responding to conventional forms. As I move through the body of Chapter 2 (especially the second section of this chapter), I will further substantiate and complicate this initial definition of arrangement. But for now I offer the definition simply to emphasize that I view the office as dynamic and able to inherently bind convention and invention together. If we are willing to shift the way we currently understand arrangement in our field, we

¹³ While this basic definition of “arrangement” will hold true throughout this chapter, I will visit competing and conflicting definitions of arrangement that will ultimately lead to the substantiation and extension of this initial definition.

stand to gain ways of mediating between convention and invention in the writing process, and thereby ways of encouraging broader social and civic access¹⁴ in our classrooms.

I begin my work in Part I by reviewing the problems arrangement faces in our field today. Although looking to arrangement might seem like an easy way to extend our attention beyond invention in the writing process (as arrangement follows invention in the ordering of rhetorical offices), in our recent history I will show that we have been quite hesitant about inviting the canon of arrangement into our classrooms or curriculums. I suggest that this is because arrangement, for many, is simply too closely associated with the highly unpopular notion of convention. As I have discussed previously, since the rise of Critical pedagogy, we seem to believe that invention and convention are mutually exclusive. We often suggest that if we invent we are working critically toward “new” social structures and social change. However, if we work with/in convention we are bound and beholden to the oppressive status quo. I will show that arrangement — because of its association with convention — has thus been viewed as in opposition with invention, and has often been dismissed as a valid pedagogical concern. However, I suggest this unfortunate view of arrangement-as-only-conventional is highly limiting to those in our field, and that there are other, more fruitful ways of conceiving of this rhetorical office that envelop invention. But in order to get at the richness of arrangement, we need to move beyond simply linking arrangement to our favored canon of invention, as Hartwell argued. Arrangement is not simply valuable because we can connect it to invention. Arrangement is capable of much more, of doing work that

¹⁴ Or “Practical access.” See the sections on the “mediational” portal of access or the section on Practical access in Chapter 1 for a more in-depth discussion of the articulation of the inventional and conventional toward social and civic ends.

invention alone cannot. Among other things, it can offer us opportunities to articulate convention and invention (which I view as centrally important to achieving Practical access in our classrooms).

In the following section, Part 2, I attempt to recover earlier, more nuanced concepts of arrangement than exist in our field today. In order to recover a definition of arrangement capable of re-linking convention and invention, I turn to some thinking from classical and medieval texts. Unlike the opposing roles played by invention and convention in the field today, a historical review of the concept of arrangement — one that long predates Expressivist and Critical models — reveals that we can indeed utilize the office of arrangement to gain an understanding of the dynamic articulations between invention and convention throughout the writing process. I will argue that because we can link convention to invention quite easily through classical and medieval notions of arrangement, this rhetorical office is of unique value to our field and warrants our careful reconsideration. Mary Shelley's description of the relationship between invention and convention through arrangement in the earlier epigraph, for example, is one that echoes notions of arrangement in earlier classical and medieval scholarship stemming from a rhetorical tradition. Again, Shelley's notion of invention is one that necessarily binds the new to what has come before it. According to Shelley, invention is humble; it cannot "bring into being the substance itself." Instead, invention is linked to the past — to convention — and this linking seems to occur specifically through the process of arrangement. Shelley posits that inventing is about "give[ing] form to dark shapeless substances" or "moulding and fashioning ideas." I will show how aspects of the intricate

relationship between invention and convention (through arrangement) that Shelley describes can easily be traced back to the classical texts of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, as well as some medieval and 18th and 19th century thinking following these earlier lines of thought. By recovering earlier notions of arrangement, I hope to demonstrate that the problems posed in Part 1 of this chapter can be easily overcome by simply digging more deeply into the rhetorical traditions of our past. And I propose that these recoveries can be useful in helping extend a lifeline to arrangement as we move into our future, a future where arrangement's unique ability to link convention and invention could be quite useful in augmenting our socially and civically motivated curriculums.

Finally, in Part 3 of this chapter, I argue that by applying a recovered, reconfigured concept of arrangement to the work in new media studies — especially the current scholarship on “remix” — we recoup a chance to articulate invention with convention within the contemporary context of our field today (and as a means of composing more complexly and achieving broader kinds of social access). By resuscitating arrangement through the concept of “remix,” we can help our students mediate the inventional with the conventional as they compose within our classrooms and within their communities. I posit, then, that developing an approach to composing new media texts¹⁵ that more centrally attends to arrangement will necessarily help us extend our attention beyond invention. After all, remix, if understood more broadly than is often the case today, requires students to consider how inventing takes place by responding to particular conventions. Ultimately, arrangement gives us a better chance of extending our

¹⁵ As stated near the close of the first chapter, it is important to note that I am following Anne Frances Wysocki's definition of “new media” here. This is a definition that focuses on texts that call attention to their own forms. New media texts are not necessarily digital.

approach to new media texts, texts that have tended (like much else in our field) to focus on the “new” or the inventional. In turn, because conventions are often not yet codified in reductive ways in new media texts (that is, conventions are still being agreed upon or shifting), it is easy for students to consider the concept of arrangement as easily encompassing both convention and invention. The easy fit between remix (or new media in general) and arrangement ultimately makes this intersection an ideal site for developing the mediational portal of access with our students. And it is precisely arrangement’s ability to link invention with convention (and to do so with relative ease in new media environments) that is essential to working our way toward achieving Practical access.

In sum, Chapter 2 will require us to do a bit of time-travel. In Part 1 of this chapter, I trace arrangement’s problems today to our recent past. Then, as a means of addressing these problems, in Part 2 I move back into the very distant past. There, I address our current dilemmas with arrangement by recovering a richer concept of the office from classical texts. Finally, the last section of the chapter places us back in the immediacy of our present. In Part 3, I posit how we might resuscitate arrangement within our new media curriculums today in order to develop the mediational portal of access, to better foster access that extends into our communities.

PART 1: Reconsidering Arrangement: Life Beyond Convention?

Our focus on invention over the last 35 years, while productive, has left us few options to address conventional properties of texts. In Part 1 I will specifically note the problems with addressing arrangement because of its association with convention. I will argue that in our recent history, we have viewed arrangement as being at odds with invention and a complex sense of audience. Arrangement has simply been reduced to the conventional. And even when we have attempted to afford attention to this rhetorical office, we have found that we are ill-equipped with the necessary language or pedagogical skills to do so. This section hopes to begin generating a dialogue around arrangement, to break the silence in our field surrounding this rhetorical canon. We need to first locate, acknowledge, and attempt to better understand arrangement if we hope to ever address its supposed problems.

Toward Finding Arrangement's Pulse in Our Field Today: Addressing Arrangement's Two Central Problems

Locating scholarship on arrangement in the field of rhetoric and composition isn't an easy task. The smatterings of writing on arrangement all seem to bemoan the level of attention it receives. In his book, *A Conceptual Theory of Rhetoric*, D'Angelo writes, "despite the countless number of composition texts, we know very little about order in composition" (55)¹⁶. In their 1990 article, JoAnne and Leonard Podis describe arrangement as an area that has "proved problematic" for teachers of writing (430). And

¹⁶ As noted in the opening of this chapter, "order," "organization," and "arrangement" are terms that all stand in for one another in the field. D'Angelo here, while stating "order," is referencing our second rhetorical canon, the canon of arrangement.

since the time Podis and Podis were writing, arrangement's status has only continued to plummet further into obscurity. That is, arrangement is hardly considered a "problem" these days because we hardly speak of it. We might imagine arrangement huddled in a dark corner at the periphery of our field, its breathing shallow, its pulse slowed.

Our silence surrounding the place of arrangement today is perhaps the first and most obvious problem to tackle. But in order to get to a place where we are talking seriously about arrangement again, we need to first understand the silence. We need to address a central question: why have we pushed arrangement to the margins in the first place? The little existing pedagogical scholarship on arrangement alludes to two main reasons it has historically, as Podis and Podis write, "proved problematic" for writing teachers (430). These reasons are as follows: 1) Arrangement is viewed in opposition to invention (or discovery, creativity); and 2) Arrangement is seen as an artificial formal consideration that distracts us from considering audience in complex ways (in other words, arrangement adheres too tightly to convention). I argue that these two supposed problems surrounding arrangement are simply two sides of the same troubled coin. If we see invention and convention as mutually exclusive — and arrangement supposedly does not and cannot include invention — then arrangement is seen as merely conventional and therefore in opposition to invention. I will argue in this chapter that in order to reconsider arrangement, really, it is necessary to move past this limiting and relatively unsubstantiated view of invention and convention as mutually exclusive. That is, we must carve out room in our field to understand invention in relation to convention if we wish to discuss arrangement more roundly and richly. At the very least, arrangement deserves to

be considered, to be brought back to the table for discussion. As a means of bringing arrangement back into the picture, and to concretely demonstrate how we have framed arrangement's two central problems in the past, I will first turn to Patrick Hartwell's work that reviews our historical approach to arrangement in our classrooms.

**Out with the Old and in with the New?:
Hartwell's Attempt to Wrestle Arrangement Away from Convention**

It is true that arrangement has certainly not been discussed widely in our field. But when we do discuss arrangement, its two central problems seem to surface repeatedly since the late 1970s. The first and most significant of these problems is that we conceive of arrangement as at odds with invention, discovery, and creativity (the major tenets of Expressivism and Critical pedagogy and some of the most influential ideas in our field to date). But *why*, we might ask, is arrangement viewed in opposition with invention? Addressing that question leads us straight to the second problem: arrangement has been too closely linked to the massively unpopular notion of convention in our field. We have failed to acknowledge the relationship between these two problems, but as I suggested in the previous section, I argue they are two sides of the same coin. Because we have viewed arrangement as conventional, our (faulty) logic of mutual exclusivity between invention and convention has made it difficult for us to recognize the ways that arrangement actually links up with invention as well (because we have already decided that arrangement is merely conventional). It is precisely this mutually exclusive relationship between invention and convention I aim to call into question throughout my discussion of arrangement in this chapter. I will argue that our history demonstrates that

resuscitating arrangement will be difficult, if not impossible, if we don't directly address arrangement's association with convention.

There has been some earlier work by a small set of scholars attempting to draw arrangement back in from the periphery of our field (Hartwell 1979; Podis 1980; Haswell 1986; Knoblauch and Brannon 1984; Larson 1987; Podis and Podis 1990). But the majority of this work has attempted to rescue arrangement by wrestling it away from the clutches of convention. The timeline of these studies (published in the late 70s through the 90s) is interesting to note. As Critical pedagogy increasingly gained steam in our field and drew our attention toward invention, such discussions about arrangement as useful *in service of invention* emerged. Unsurprisingly, scholars working on arrangement during the Critical era in our field point most often to arrangement's central problems: foreclosing invention and, inversely, holding on too tightly to convention (Haswell 1986; Larson 1987; Knoblauch and Brannon 1984). In these studies arrangement is, of course, most often discussed as problematic due to its association with convention. However, some scholars during this time try to redeem arrangement for its ability to help us engage in inventive work (Hartwell 1979; Podis 1980; Podis & Podis 1990). Arrangement can be useful, they argue, if it is viewed as inventive, if it is in service of invention.

In Patrick Hartwell's 1979 early article "Teaching Arrangement: A Pedagogy," he suggests that historically the work of arrangement is understood to occur only after or beyond invention (549). According to Hartwell, arrangement and our approaches to teaching it are considered — unlike Process or Critical models that heavily privilege invention — simply too "mechanical" (549), "artificial" (550), or

“conventional” (Hartwell 554). Throughout Hartwell’s article, it is repeatedly made clear that arrangement’s central problem is that it is much too tightly linked to convention (i.e. rigid structures and fixed forms of texts). And it is precisely the alignment of arrangement with these fixed structures, forms, and conventions that concerns Hartwell. Here, I review Hartwell’s historical approach to pedagogies of arrangement as a means of making visible arrangement’s central problems. Although Hartwell’s argument is indeed an early call for linking arrangement to invention, it is one that I will later argue unnecessarily rallies against the careful consideration of convention in the process. In other words, Hartwell insists that our static approaches to arrangement are the fault of convention, and that if we link arrangement to invention instead, we would be able to work through the troubled, static sense of audience that often emerges in our students’ writing because of the problematic, too-conventional sense of arrangement.

As a means of showing how our too-conventional approaches to arrangement have fallen short (i.e. relied too heavily on convention instead of invention), Hartwell reviews three main pedagogical tactics of teaching arrangement. First, he describes a “methods of development” approach focusing on “illustration, contrast, comparison, definition, and analysis” (Hartwell 549). These methods or “modes” of writing, Hartwell argues, are outdated and were initially developed in the 19th century. He suggests the modes are problematic because, “it is almost impossible to find serious professional writing that remains consistently in a particular ‘mode’ for more than a few sentences ... [this] mechanical approach to form ignores the primacy of content, of process in writing” (549). Here Hartwell critiques this first model — the “methods of development

model” — for its inability to produce writing that is relevant in real-life, “professional” contexts. Considering arrangement, in this case for Hartwell, removes writers from inventing and reflecting on all of the modes and strategies available to them, and employing those in more idiosyncratic, nuanced ways. Notice that although Hartwell is writing on arrangement, he points to the “primacy of content” in the writing process (549). This reveals Hartwell’s privileging of “inventing the critical idea” (or content) over attention to form or arrangement. Hartwell’s statement reveals how invention was viewed during this time as paramount in the writing process (even by those like Hartwell himself who wished to pursue unpopular scholarly topics such as arrangement). The “methods approach” described here therefore demonstrates the two problems of arrangement. Because of its inherent over-valuation of form and convention, Hartwell dismisses the “methods of development” approach as at odds with invention (which is the first of arrangement’s problems). Additionally, he posits that this approach makes it impossible for students to produce meaningful texts for real, “professional” audiences. The “methods approach” is simply too conventional for its own good (the second of arrangement’s problems) (Hartwell 549). I agree with Hartwell that the “methods approach” he describes is indeed considered outdated and reductive. However, the manner in which Hartwell dismisses the approach reifies the mutually exclusive relationship between invention and convention; because the approach is deemed too conventional it is therefore understood to be inherently at odds with invention.

The next model of teaching arrangement is what Hartwell calls the “paragraph” approach. On the problems of this approach Hartwell states:

Usually [the paragraph approach] is reduced, as far as our students are concerned, to starting every paragraph with a "topic sentence" (although we admit the professional writers are allowed to put theirs in the middle of a paragraph or at the end or even to "imply" them), and then "developing" it with examples. The march of paragraphs is as boring as the system of the RAND mathematicians, each paragraph four or five sentences long, a topic sentence and illustrations, with no coherent transition or movement, no interplay between thesis and example, no pattern of emphasis or exploration. By reducing the paragraph to a rule-governed abstraction, we have destroyed its life. (549)

Once again, we see the attention to the arrangement of a paragraph viewed as abstracted by convention, as divorced from the "real" contexts of how we use writing in our lives. Hartwell is sure to use the example of how the paragraph convention is at odds with how "professional writers" compose. The convention of the paragraph, then, is the enemy of invention. It is what separates us from the real, and the professional. It pulls us away from the richness of our social and civic goals as composers. Hartwell concludes that the "paragraph" approach to arrangement is just as problematic as the "methods" approach in that it favors conventional form over (critical) content, arrangement over invention. Both the "methods" and the "paragraph" approach to arrangement are ill at ease with Hartwell's goal: a view of arrangement as tightly articulated to invention and thereby a more complex, "real" sense of audience. And to achieve this, Hartwell attempts to convince us that we must abandon the conventions of arrangement altogether.

Finally, the last historical model of teaching arrangement Hartwell reviews is what he calls the “fixed forms” model (549-550). Unlike the “modes” and “paragraph” approach, Hartwell concedes that we do encounter “fixed forms” in “real-life” writing situations (550). The archetype of this approach can be described as, “the five-hundred-word theme, with introduction, three main paragraphs, and conclusion,” or what we might consider the five-paragraph essay today (550). However, Hartwell says about the fixed forms approach that it can be reduced to “patterns of organization that the writer’s meaning is stuffed into, like sardines into a can” (550). Here again, we see arrangement’s troubled relationship with mechanics and conventions. While Hartwell acknowledges that fixed forms *can* be useful, and that students “do need to learn them,” he prefers instead to conceive of arrangement in ways that better link it to invention. To do so, he proposes an “open form” approach (550). On this approach he states:

Most real-life writing situations demand a sense of "open form" — the ability to find the strategy and pattern of arrangement appropriate to (perhaps inherent in) the interaction of idea, audience, and voice — and the manipulation of fixed forms should follow, not precede, the student's connection of form in writing with the formal principles inherent in any discourse. (Hartwell 550)

Hartwell is acknowledging that there is an inherent linking between arrangement and invention, form and content, or as he puts it, “the strategy and pattern of arrangement” and “the interaction of idea, audience, and voice.” Yet, the distinction he makes between “fixed” and “open” forms is troubling to me, as I would argue that in the “real-life” contexts that Hartwell describes, composers are always both borrowing aspects of

(relatively) fixed forms and opening those up (responding in new, unconventional ways to those fixed conventions). If we had to perpetually invent new, open forms, the act of composing in order to communicate would be highly inefficient and exhausting. That is to say, while certain composing situations call for new, open forms, some simply do not. And I argue, unlike Hartwell, that we should not place primacy (or a sense of moral superiority) on compositions that rely on open rather than fixed forms. We should place primacy, instead, on efficacy of our communication with others, and how we employ language to accomplish work within our communities.

The distinction between open and fixed forms is more telling about the time Hartwell was writing than it is useful for us today, in the context of our field where invention is always central in our pedagogies, and where students are rarely asked to consider “fixed forms” at all. For Hartwell, arrangement was problematic if it was associated with convention or “fixed forms.” But arrangement could be redeemed by linking it to invention and to what Hartwell calls “open forms.” However, I suggest that Hartwell’s agenda of linking arrangement to invention only to dissociate it from convention only exacerbates the problem of considering writing for complex and “real” audiences (the goal that seems to matter most to Hartwell). A dismissal of convention (or any sense of “fixed forms”) leaves us little room to see the dynamic relationship between invention and convention *through arrangement* in the writing process. That is, while Hartwell’s critique of conventions as rote, mechanical, or artificial is likely something we want to carefully consider, I will suggest that arrangement needs a more balanced approach between invention and convention rather than one that simply views invention

as having value and convention as devoid of such. For example, Hartwell states that fixed forms should “follow, not precede” the student’s consideration of form in the writing process. However, I will argue that treating conventions as an afterthought of invention reifies the very problem Hartwell writes about (the division between invention and arrangement). While Hartwell intends, ultimately, to link arrangement to invention, he does this at arrangement’s (and especially the conventions of arrangement’s) expense. Arrangement, for Hartwell, is only progressive and useful if it is in service of invention, if it helps students create new, open forms.

**Holding onto the Old as a Means to the New?:
Convention in the Cognitivist Perspective of Arrangement**

Throughout his 1979 review of the three historical approaches to teaching arrangement, Hartwell makes a clear case for linking arrangement to invention (and ultimately developing a stronger, more complex sense of audience in students’ writing). As a means of doing so, Hartwell attempts to also give us new ways of talking about arrangement that depend on his “open forms” approach. However, as I have discussed, the central problem is that Hartwell’s attempt to rescue arrangement clearly dismisses convention. While Hartwell establishes precedent in our field for linking invention and arrangement in our pedagogies, I argue that to truly link these offices today — and to actually find new ways of approaching arrangement — we must get a clearer sense of arrangement’s relationship to convention itself. After all, teaching formal conventions can be much more than “providing slots to be filled with meaning” (Hartwell 549). Conventions, I will argue later in Part 2 of this chapter, can in and of themselves be

generative. Perhaps Hartwell puts his critique of arrangement-as-conventional most bluntly when he says, “We restrict the teaching of arrangement to three basic methods. All of them boring” (549). In sum, without its more interesting counterpart, invention, Hartwell argues that arrangement is too dull. But while this view of arrangement was widely accepted, others argued for the necessity of teaching these “boring,” conventional forms to our less “fluent” students.

Leonard Podis responds to Patrick Hartwell’s call for more attention to arrangement by publishing a proposed pedagogy a year later, in 1980. Podis, who follows a cognitivist perspective, proposes some new pedagogical approaches to arrangement. But interestingly, and very likely to Hartwell’s chagrin, Podis’ pedagogy turns back toward a reliance on the conventions of arrangement as a means of acquiring a fuller, richer “fluency” (a fluency from which one can — eventually — be more inventive). We see a re-emergence of convention in Podis’ model because he believes that more remedial students need explicit instruction in how to conceive of the conventions of arrangement. That is, Podis’ proposed pedagogy — while most invested in good, “developed” writing that privileges invention — focuses heavily on the cognitive conventions of organization. Podis offers some “usable principles” that less-developed students can apply to their writing. While in Hartwell we see convention as dismissed in favor of linking invention of arrangement, in Podis we see convention re-introduced as a cognitively necessary first-step in moving less experienced writers toward successful composing. Notice how Podis characterizes the relationship between arrangement and convention here in the development of learning to write. He states:

Those students who are fluent writers by nature probably already know intuitively how to carry forth many of the organizational operations I have been describing in this essay. But students with more organizational difficulties need usable principles to guide them as they begin making their outlines and otherwise planning the order of what they will write. If such students are themselves to become fluent arrangers of their material, they will ultimately have to confront and assimilate the basic truth I have touched on a number of times in this essay: that idea and order are essentially inseparable. In order to reach a genuine understanding of this truth, however, these less fluent writers must practice arranging and rearranging their material, and they must do so with the benefit of specific and direct guidance. Unfortunately, composition courses generally fail to provide the kinds of specific "usable principles" the learners will need. It is my hope that this essay can provide a starting point for the revisions that we, as composition teachers, need to make to our current repertoire of relatively ineffectual techniques for teaching arrangement. (Podis 204)

Podis reveals two distinct attitudes he holds about arrangement here: 1) arrangement is linked to invention (e.g. "idea and order are essentially inseparable"); and 2) arrangement is, in fact, often highly conventional; a skill that our students have "fluency" in, or do not. While Hartwell and others in the field would be amenable to agreeing with the former point, Podis' choice to use a cognitivist perspective to insist on the latter is in direct conflict with many central tenets of Critical pedagogy (which eschew developmental or evolutionary approaches to writing). That is, the cognitivist frame used to address

arrangement relies on the idea that more “fluent” composers have internalized the complexity of negotiating formal conventions (and ultimately using those for generative, creative, or inventive purposes). However, in Podis’ view it is fundamental for less “fluent” writers to learn such formal conventions with “specific and direct guidance” (204). In Podis’ developmental model, conventions are not the enemy of invention. Instead, they are foundations that eventually make it possible. But the remedial role Podis’ cognitivist approach ascribes to the conventions of arrangement, ultimately, is at odds with many values at the core of our field. This explains why scholarship on arrangement by those like Podis only further shuffled arrangement to the margins.

Hartwell’s “open forms” model, not to mention mainstream iterations of Critical pedagogy, would certainly find Podis’ call for relying on direct instruction of the conventions of arrangement for less “fluent” writers highly problematic (and, for Critical pedagogues, even morally reprehensible). Podis’ suggestion that “fluent writers by nature” know “how to carry forth many of the organizational operations” that he spells out (204), would be troubled by Podis’ lack of attributing such conventions to dominant power structures and attributing them instead to “natural” cognitive ability. But despite how we view the acquisition of such conventions, Podis’ model is based heavily on the premise that the operations of writing are indeed conventional, that there are, in fact, tacitly better or worse, correct and incorrect ways of writing. The firm grip on convention here (especially one that fails to acknowledge the dominant power structures in relation to one’s familiarity or ability to write conventionally) would have been viewed by most in the field as outdated. Yet surprisingly, in a much later 1990 article co-written with

JoAnne Podis, Podis and Podis expand on the “usable principles,” and here we can get a sense of what this more conventional, cognitivist pedagogy might look like:

I introduce a second principle of organization: group likes with likes. This is a simple and comprehensible notion, yet it is seldom taught in a direct fashion. It is also one of the most important organizational principles, for it applies to perhaps half of all organizational errors that composition teachers mark on student essays (e.g., "You've already raised the idea of financial difficulties on p. 2. — rearrange and integrate this paragraph with that one"). To teach this principle I use an example drawn from everyday experience. Suppose you are placing a single order for yourself and two friends at a fast food restaurant. You would probably not say "one hamburger, one order of french fries, another hamburger, one chocolate milkshake, another order of french fries, another hamburger, another milkshake, etc." It is more likely that you would say "three hamburgers, three orders of french fries, and three chocolate shakes." As we noted earlier, an arrangement such as the first one is not wrong, but it is certainly inferior if your purpose is to convey your food request clearly and efficiently. To make that first arrangement more efficient, you would need to apply the principle of grouping likes with likes. If your purpose were to confuse and irritate the counter person, of course, you would probably be more successful using the first arrangement.

Here we can see a clear valuation in how Podis and Podis view the conventions of arrangement. If one understands the convention of “likes with likes,” for example, their composition will be correct and more efficient. If a student’s writing violates this

convention, it is an “error,” and therefore will cause confusion and irritation for listeners/readers. I argue that it is precisely, in fact, this attitude about arrangement-as-conventional that made arrangement wholly incompatible with our field as it increasingly came to tightly embrace invention (and thereby dismissed conventions that were deemed socially problematic). But those in our field didn’t simply dismiss the conventional aspect of arrangement, an aspect that draws upon the idea of a relatively fixed form or structure, a tacitly better or worse way of organizing. Instead, we seemingly brushed the idea of arrangement — along with convention — to the margins of our field altogether. But throwing out arrangement because of its unfashionable association with convention is perhaps akin to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. That is, in pushing arrangement to the margins, we’ve lost the other half of Podis’ argument; we’ve lost the view that asserts, “idea and order are essentially inseparable” (204). According to Podis, we can’t truly explore invention or arrangement without acknowledging one’s relationship to the other. While Podis’ cognitive approach relied too heavily on convention and an evolutionary model of learning to write, I argue that we need to move past Hartwell’s arrangement-as-inventional (i.e. arrangement in service of invention) and Podis and Podis’ arrangement-as-conventional views. We need a view of arrangement that acknowledges invention in relation to convention through the act of arrangement. And although our recent history fails to offer us such a view, I argue that our distant past will be instructive in resuscitating arrangement in this way.

While Hartwell as well as Podis and Podis claim that invention and arrangement are clearly linked, as a field we have remained quite unclear about the relationship

between these canons. Thereby, as Hartwell suggests about our earlier approaches to arrangement, we have once again “inevitably limit[ed] both [invention and arrangement]” (549). To better make use of both arrangement and invention in our classrooms, Hartwell suggests that what we really need is to “begin to explore the points at which arrangement merges with invention, at which the form of a discourse merges with its content” (554). Despite Hartwell’s call for this consideration in 1979, we have not — as a field — fully taken up this challenge. Because of the weight of invention-focused theories, I don’t think we’ve been able to. But if we are serious about reconsidering arrangement, we must also reconsider its relationship with convention. If we really mean to attend to arrangement in all of its complexities, we need to recognize the ways that it encompasses convention, too. Rescuing arrangement only to be the indentured servant of invention will get us nowhere we haven’t already been. But if we can restore a view of arrangement that links convention and invention, the possibilities are endless, uncharted, and unknown.

**The Search Party is Out:
Toward Seeking A Sense of Arrangement that Links Convention to Invention**

Those in our field today limit arrangement to convention, abstracted from the contexts of our lives. In the previous sections, I have attempted to show how arrangement’s problems exist because of an underlying mutually exclusive relationship between invention and convention (that we have linked tightly to arrangement) in our field. But viewing arrangement as at odds with invention because of its association with convention has posed a more practical problem today: the dismissal of arrangement and

the silence surrounding it. Even if our field is able to recover ways of linking invention to arrangement (as Hartwell hoped), or recognize the ability of arrangement to help us better address audience (as both Hartwell and Podis and Podis argued), right now many in our field simply don't know where to begin in order to infuse arrangement back into our pedagogies. We are bankrupt of a common language for thinking, writing, and teaching arrangement. We continue to use the term "arrangement" interchangeably with words like "order," "organization," and "form," words that tend to connote static senses of the term. Although the contemporary problems with arrangement I traced here first reared their heads in the scholarship of the 1970s, today we are no closer to dealing with arrangement's complexities. Just as Podis and Podis suggested in 1990, arrangement *is still* problematic for teachers of writing. It is problematic because we don't know what exactly it is within our field. It is problematic because we don't understand what social potential arrangement holds. It is problematic because we don't even understand when and where and why we are already talking about it in our classrooms. It is problematic because we don't understand why, as we move more deeply into the 21st century, a century in which literacy will become increasingly bound to new media texts, we'll need arrangement more than ever (The New London Group 2000; Wysocki 2004; Blake-Yancey 2005; Hull & Nelson 2005).

In sum, Part 1 has shown how our field has perpetually linked the office of arrangement almost exclusively — and rather unfortunately — to convention (failing to acknowledge the relationship between invention and arrangement or invention and convention as Mary Shelley and a multitude of other writers have done). Because we

have come to hold convention itself in such low esteem, we have much too easily dismissed attention to arrangement (which, again, we understand as highly conventional). In the wake of Critical pedagogies it would be admittedly easier to resuscitate arrangement by dismissing the conventional aspect of the canon altogether (as Hartwell attempted). Yet, I want to move beyond arguing that we must throw the baby (arrangement) out with the bathwater (convention). Instead, this chapter is built on the premise (originally noted in Chapter 1) that convention — *in and of itself* — is of necessary value (both to our field, and to the act of arrangement). To do this work, Part 2 aims to recover arrangement in order to offer writing teachers ways of mediating the complex relationship between invention and convention *through arrangement*. Part 2 hopes to revise our field's often negative views of arrangement (because of its association with convention) and in the process urge those in our field to correct our course of thinking about convention itself.

Despite the problems that riddle the concept of arrangement I discussed throughout this section, I suggest throughout the next section of this chapter that we have much to gain from a serious, sustained, and nuanced reconsideration of the term. The pedagogical functions of arrangement — if resuscitated — I argue, have the potential to push our field in radical and rich directions, especially at this particular moment in time when, as I'll discuss later in the last portion of this chapter, new media texts lend themselves to being easily viewed through the lens of arrangement. Although it is not the operative sense of arrangement in our field today, when considered from a different perspective, arrangement can be understood as inherently linked to invention, as capable

of helping us understand the dynamic movement between convention and invention in the composing process, and as useful in highlighting an inherently social role between audience and composer. The next section will help provide such a framework, to reel in arrangement from the periphery and recover ways of talking about this concept in the contemporary context of our field.

PART 2: Resuscitating Arrangement: Linking Convention to Invention Through Arrangement in Our Scholarship

In Part 1 of this Chapter, I demonstrated that our sense of arrangement today has been limited by the mutually exclusive relationship between invention and convention in our field. In Part 2 I will suggest that by carefully examining earlier ways of thinking about this office, we can resuscitate arrangement and recoup some of its value. To do this, I first review scholarship on classical concepts from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian to propose a definition of arrangement that will help us link invention to convention. I argue that this scholarship supports a view of arrangement as the dynamic process of shaping or moulding a text for a given audience, and to achieve a particular purpose. Unlike our views today, classical scholarship lends us a sense of arrangement as an act that easily encompasses the vacillation between inventing and responding to conventional forms. After establishing the presence of this richer sense of arrangement in the classical literature, I briefly discuss how the connections between invention and convention developed and shifted in medieval scholarship, as well as throughout 18th and 19th century approaches to writing. While in Part 1 I demonstrated the supposed problems

surrounding arrangement today, in Part 2 my goal is to reframe the concept to directly address those problems. Ultimately, resuscitating arrangement is a pivotal step in my larger project of developing the mediational portal of access in the classrooms of our future, in extending access beyond our universities and out into our communities.

Because arrangement continues to face much opposition in our field, I want to be clear from the outset of this section why I am attempting to recover the concept of arrangement from our distant past to begin with. In other words, why look back now? What *exactly* can an antiquated concept of arrangement offer us in the current context of our field? Classical literature is useful, I suggest, because it long pre-dates the totalizing influences of Expressivism and Critical pedagogy in our discipline. As I explained earlier, such theories practically effaced attention to arrangement (because of arrangement's close association with convention). By looking back to theories that existed long before arrangement was stigmatized by its association with convention, I will show throughout Part 2 that invention and convention have not always been thought of as mutually exclusive. And I will argue that there is a significant theoretical foundation in the rhetorical traditions of our past for recognizing convention and invention as inherently linked within the composing process. I intend to reconstruct this foundation and build upon it in an effort to remarry invention and convention today.

Because our classical scholarship lends us a richer sense of arrangement, I argue that this recovered canon offers our field two main assets if we can, indeed, resuscitate it. Firstly — and as stated above — a classical concept of arrangement offers us a valuable chance to re-marry invention to convention in our field today. And secondly, a classical

sense of arrangement provides us with a potential way to more viably link the writing process with our social and civic spheres (i.e. through engaging in the methodology of negotiating between invention and convention in the writing process, we can better understand writing as an act extending into social and civic spheres). While arrangement has historically given our field pause, the chance at gaining these assets makes it well-worth reconsidering arrangement, and taking the risks of resuscitating it within our field. If we can indeed resuscitate these historical views of arrangement, we stand a chance at reeling this office back in from the periphery of our field in order to better meet our most central social and civic goals, goals important to the future of our discipline and to the place of writing instruction in public education more broadly.

**Sussing Out a Supposed Split:
A Necessary Re-Reading of Classical Texts Today**

As I discussed in Chapter 1, we have all but buried convention in our field. And earlier in this chapter, Chapter 2, I have shown that arrangement has been highly stigmatized because of its association with convention¹⁷. While there have been efforts in our past to link arrangement to invention (by dismissing the role of convention in arrangement), I have suggested above that what we truly need is a current view of arrangement that articulates invention with convention. An office of arrangement that fails to include a rounder sense of convention (or a sense of convention at all, for that

¹⁷ As stated in Chapter 1, both Expressivism and Critical pedagogy attempted to subvert dominant power structures by eschewing convention. Expressivism promoted creative expression as a means of freeing students from the limiting confines of convention. And Critical pedagogy accomplishes this by dismissing dominant forms altogether (everything from standard grammar to genre conventions) and, in turn, encourages students to create “new” forms (and thereby new social structures).

matter) leaves us little room to consider what it means to compose within already existing communities, communities that undoubtedly rely on existing conventions. Hence, without a sense of arrangement that envelops invention *always in relation* to convention, I argue that we will continue to struggle to meet the social and civic goals that have been sought after by those in our discipline for decades. If what we need is a sense of arrangement that includes and validates the relationship between invention and convention in the composing process, then the answer to our current dilemma rests in our past. I suggest that the classical scholarship of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian is a fruitful place for beginning such an exploration.

Even though classical scholarship is quite ideal for linking invention to convention through arrangement, turning back to this scholarship poses an interesting dilemma. Yes, I argue that classical texts indeed envision the role of invention and convention within arrangement in precisely the ways our field needs most today. Yet, there have been decades of scholarship on these classical texts that have also privileged invention (likely these readings of the classics have stemmed from the investments of Critical theories sweeping the humanities throughout the last several decades). That is, even if these classical texts offer us ways of linking invention and convention through arrangement (as I will later demonstrate they do), the theoretical tides in our field have led us to struggle with recognizing this more complex relationship between invention and convention. Instead, a significant amount of rhetorical scholarship produced over the last several decades continues to highlight the inventional aspects of these classical texts. Here, I posit a re-reading of Aristotle's *The Rhetoric* grounded on the premise that the

rhetorical canons were intended to be talked about in conjunction with one another. I argue that we need to pay greater attention to the whole of the composing process discussed in such theories. And perhaps most importantly, we need to stop shuffling convention (a very prominent aspect of classical Greek and Roman scholarship) to the margins in the contemporary context of our field. In order to begin the work of this re-reading, we need to first address a fundamentally perceived split between the rhetorical canons of invention and arrangement. This perceived split between the canons will serve as an example of the privileging of invention in readings of rhetorical theory throughout the last several decades, and will give us insight into how contextualizing such readings might help us extend our attention beyond invention and further into the messiness of the composing process.

One of the most common examples offering evidence for the perceived split between invention and the other canons occurs in one of the most influential classical texts, Aristotle's *The Rhetoric*. *The Rhetoric* is divided into three Books; many argue that Books I and II heavily privilege invention, while Book III focuses on arrangement (*taxis*) and style (*lexis*). The structure of *The Rhetoric* has been discussed as a means of determining Aristotle's distribution of attention across the five rhetorical canons (e.g. invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery). Aristotelian scholars such as George A. Kennedy, for example, note the divide between invention and arrangement in the form of Aristotle's *The Rhetoric*. Kennedy argues that the structure of the text is evidence Aristotle privileged the canon of invention over arrangement (and the other rhetorical

offices). In discussing the structure of *The Rhetoric*, and specifically the role of arrangement in this structure, Kennedy states the following:

Most rhetorical treatises, both before and after Aristotle, discuss invention in terms of the conventional arrangement of parts of a judicial speech. In the *Rhetoric*, however, arrangement is ignored in the discussion of invention in book 1 and 2 and treated in book 3 almost as an afterthought: something expected in the discussion of rhetoric, but of relatively little importance. (Kennedy 258)

Kennedy first notes the link between invention and arrangement that was common in a classical rhetorical approach more broadly (i.e. “both before and after Aristotle”). This link is important because it immediately highlights the ways that a rhetorical approach linked invention and convention through arrangement. Kennedy describes how in the rhetorical view typical of the time, invention occurred in response to the “conventional arrangement of parts.” Immediately in Kennedy’s statement here we can recognize a view of arrangement that includes a vacillation between convention and invention, a view that we have long-lost in our field today.

However, despite Kennedy’s concession that a dynamic view of arrangement (one that articulated invention and convention) was common in classical rhetorical theory, he goes on in the passage quoted above to describe a supposedly significant theoretical shift evident in the form of *The Rhetoric*. According to Kennedy, because *The Rhetoric* breaks arrangement (which is present primarily in Book III in the discussion of *taxis*) off from invention (which is discussed heavily throughout Books I and II), Aristotle is failing to place arrangement centrally in his theory of composing. While Kennedy’s reading of

Aristotle's structure is not uncommon, I argue that Kennedy, who published his commentary on Aristotle in the 1980s and 90s¹⁸, was influenced to read *The Rhetoric* in ways that aligned with the Critical theoretical frame of the time. In other words, in the paragraphs that follow I suggest that the distinction between invention and arrangement noted above by Kennedy is exaggerated. And I posit that this exaggeration might be explained by our academic culture's need to hone in on invention, of finding ways of privileging invention in classical rhetorical theory at a time when Critical theory was sweeping the humanities.

While Kennedy's justification for reading invention and arrangement as split off from one another in *The Rhetoric* is certainly supportable in the text, I argue that it is equally likely that Aristotle composed his text in ways that took for granted the normative treatment of the canons during the time he wrote. In other words, recall that Kennedy himself mentions that "Most rhetorical treatises, both before and after Aristotle, discuss invention in terms of the conventional arrangement of parts of a judicial speech" (Kennedy 258). I do not mean to discount Kennedy's reading of the structure of *The Rhetoric* as indicative of a *possible* privileging of invention by Aristotle *within that specific text*. Rather, I mean simply to offer enough evidence to warrant a reconsideration of the claim that Aristotle viewed arrangement as merely an "afterthought" or as divorced, somehow, from invention (that Kennedy suggests). Although my analysis in the following section is not meant to be exhaustive, it is intended to be substantial enough to create reasonable doubt that the structure of *The Rhetoric* is enough to evidence a

¹⁸ This was during the heyday of the influence of Critical theory that, of course, privileged invention.

theoretical splitting of invention and arrangement in Aristotle's thinking. Like his rhetorical predecessors and followers of the time, I suggest Aristotle's descriptions of the process of composing in *The Rhetoric* offer us chances to recognize more fluidity between the rhetorical canons — and a more dynamic relationship between invention and convention — than our contemporary scholarship often credits.

Taxis, Texts, Topoi, and Contexts:
Two Cases For Linking Arrangement, Invention & the Social in Aristotle

There are two means by which we might link invention to arrangement in Aristotle's *The Rhetoric*. Kennedy's assertion that Aristotle treats arrangement only in Book III as an "afterthought" can only hold true if we limit our discussion of arrangement in *The Rhetoric* as merely equated with the term *taxis*. Again, in this view, invention is discussed in the well-known Books I and II, and both *taxis* (arrangement) and *lexis* (style) appear predominantly in the less-read Book III. However, if we look beyond this perhaps too-easy distinction made between invention and arrangement-as-*taxis* in the structure of *The Rhetoric*, there are a couple of grounds on which we might challenge the supposed split between the canons. Firstly, we might read the portions of the text on *taxis* as enveloping aspects of invention, and therefore blurring the lines between the canons. And secondly, we might use Aristotle's discussion of *topoi* (especially the common *topoi*) in Book II as a means of linking invention to arrangement (and, through the special *topoi*, the social sphere). Below I wish to make the case for both of these points in order to offer the most evidence for dissolving the perceived split between invention and arrangement.

The first way we might dissolve the supposed splitting in *The Rhetoric* involves recognizing inventive work in Aristotle's discussion of *taxis* in Book III. While *taxis* seems rather conventional or mechanical upon first glance, we might read these formal conventions of arrangement in light of the rest of *The Rhetoric*, and in light of the rhetorical tradition out of which *The Rhetoric* hails. If we are more broadly considering the context of Book III in *The Rhetoric*, then we can better recognize Aristotle's intended linking between arrangement and invention and, more importantly, arrangement, invention, and our social and civic spheres.

As I discussed above, George A. Kennedy, one of the most well-respected scholars of classical texts, states that most rhetorical texts "discuss invention in terms of the conventional arrangement of parts" (258). This statement by Kennedy is important because it illustrates that the structure of Aristotle's *The Rhetoric* was anomalous in its supposed splitting of invention from arrangement (or textual convention). The first case I'll make for refuting this (albeit anomalous) treatment of arrangement is to show that, while Aristotle's discussion of *taxis* might have seemed too rote, mechanical, or conventional because it was split off from the discussion of invention, we need to read these portions of the *The Rhetoric* more generously and in relation to its whole.

Aristotle's notion of *taxis*, according to scholars like Kennedy, is most closely associated with the office of arrangement today. Although *taxis* can often appear rote in form, then, we might easily consider how the structuring or ordering of parts discussed in Book III might be understood more flexibly. Note, for example, how Aristotle moves from a description of *taxis* that seems generalizable to any rhetorical situation, to one that

accounts for specific social contexts (and therefore demands more nuanced choices by composers). By accounting for how social situation is correlated to *taxis*, Aristotle is offers us a way to see arrangement as linked to invention within the social sphere.

Aristotle first begins with his discussion of the generalizably necessary parts of a speech in Chapter 13.4. He states:

The necessary parts, then, are the *prothesis* [statement of the proposition] and *pistis* [proof of the statement]. These are, therefore, the parts that really belong [in every speech]; and at the most prooemium, *prothesis*, *pistis*, epilogue.

Here, Aristotle is arguing that while some speeches may include what he calls the “*prooemium*” (what we might call the “introduction” or even the “prologue” today) and the epilogue, these parts are not necessary in *every* speech. But the statement (or *prothesis*) and the proof (or *pistis*) are the fundamentals; they are necessarily required. One cannot remove the *prothesis* or *pistis* and be left with a speech. While Aristotle’s division of the “speech” into a 4-part taxonomy seems rather rigid, his concession that not all speeches require all 4 of the parts is inherently allowing for some rhetorical flexibility, or some room to account for variance in the process of invention within the social situation. One does not blindly follow a mechanical, conventional 4-part formula in giving a speech. Instead, “the speech,” throughout the next several chapters for Aristotle, is increasingly linked to audience, context, and the social sphere through his discussion of the three species of rhetoric. In sum, the 4-part proposed taxonomy here seems conventional in nature, but it is important to note that *it does not foreclose invention*, especially if we recognize that one invents within this 4-part structure. That is, if we see

the 4-parts as the fundamental *places* where invention occurs in order to achieve a particular purpose for a particular audience, then the structure is a convention of arrangement that makes room for invention. *Taxis*, in this view, is no different than the relationship between invention and convention through arrangement that Kennedy notes to describe the typical views by others during that time.

As we move further into Book III, there is more evidence to support a concept of arrangement as linking to invention and extending out into the social sphere. In the very next chapter of Book III, Chapter 14, Aristotle focuses in on the first of the 4-part model of a speech, the *prooemion*. Recall that the *prooemion* was not considered, in the first place, a required part of every speech. To further nuance our thinking on the *prooemion*, Chapter 14 is divided into three portions recognizing different kinds (or species) of speeches, and therefore different kind of *prooemion*. These species (that we see echoed from an earlier discussion of the special topics in Book 2) are as follows: epideictic, judicial, and deliberative (Aristotle 3.14). Aristotle's general umbrella definition of the *prooemion* is described as follows, "The *prooemion* is the beginning of a speech, what a prologue is in poetry and a *proaulion* in flute-playing; for all these are the beginnings and, as it were, pathmakers for one who is continuing on" (Aristotle 3.14; Kennedy 260). Here, Aristotle describes a generalizable function of openings, but Aristotle goes on to detail how each of these social settings influence the specific function of the *prooemion*, and therefore the nature of inventing the *prooemion* in these various contexts. For example, the *prooemia* of epideictic speeches are "drawn from praise or blame" (261). In deliberative speeches (often these were political speeches) there was, according to

Aristotle, little need for *prooemion* at all (Kennedy 265). And in judicial speeches (that consider an injustice or justice) Aristotle acknowledges that the *prooemia* function quite differently. He states, “In [judicial] speeches and in epic there is a sample of the argument in order that [the audience] may know what the speech is about and [their] thought not be left hanging” (262). Although Aristotle’s division of *prooemia* into three functional categories (epideictic, judicial, and deliberative) might seem rather reductive despite his noted differences, it seems that those taking up his work responded by further nuancing such categories. For example, in Kennedy’s notes on judicial *prooemion* at the beginning of the chapter, he mentions that, “Among the work of Demosthenes is a collection of *prooemia* adaptable to a variety of judicial cases” (Kennedy 260). If those such as Demosthenes further nuanced Aristotle’s taxonomy, I believe we can take this as a bit of evidence that Aristotle did not intend these general descriptions of the *prooemion* in each of the species of rhetoric to capture *all* possible and probable nuances, or all of the social circumstances requiring invention. It seems perfectly fair to read Aristotle as intending these categories, rather, as very generalizable heuristics that could be flexed, adapted, and altered to fit the needs of a composer inventing within more specific instances. In other words, the 4-part form offered *starting places* from which one could invent a speech. If we read Aristotle most generously (and in the context of the historical moment in which he wrote), the section of *The Rhetoric* on *taxis* offers us a way to see arrangement as melded with the canon of invention and with the social (through his discussion of how speeches were crafted according to the three species). This might seem especially true if we note that Book III follows Book II, and so it would seem logical to

map Aristotle's points about invention onto the next Book. In sum here, I argue that Aristotle recognizes the different functions of a speech in different social contexts, and he intends the heuristics he proposes as rough taxonomical guidelines to be employed for more nuanced invention through the process of oration.

I have just argued that we might read Book III of *The Rhetoric* in the broader context that it was produced in order to see *taxis* as linked to invention. Here, in making my next point, I will turn to discuss the way that we might see invention and arrangement as linked in Book II of *The Rhetoric* through Aristotle's discussion of *topoi* (or topics of invention). While according to readings like Kennedy's, most of the explicit discussion of arrangement occurs in Book III's discussion of *taxis*, the classical Greek roots of arrangement are certainly linked to Aristotle's notion of topics (or *topoi*) as well. While scholars like Kennedy argue that Aristotle viewed arrangement as divorced from invention, or as an "afterthought," I argue that we can re-read Aristotle's discussion of *topoi* in the earlier books of *The Rhetoric* as comfortably encompassing the rhetorical canon of arrangement. It is Aristotle's discussion of the common and special *topoi* that gives us the best chance at linking arrangement with invention. Additionally, considering the *topoi* offers us a more complex sense of audience necessary for efficient and successful engagement in the social sphere.

Topoi, most literally, means "place," and we might think of *topoi* as the rhetorical places where invention happens. *Topoi*, it seems, served as organizational heuristics for thought during classical Greek social occasions (Aristotle 2.23). Aristotle divided his *topoi* into discussions of what he called the "common" and "special" topics. Although

both served as a kind of structuring heuristic — or structuring of the elements of ideas — the common *topoi* were understood as more closely tied to forms, while the special *topoi* were a means of argumentation. Like in his discussion of *taxis*, Aristotle’s special *topoi* centralized the various species of rhetoric: judicial, deliberative, and epideictic. These *topoi* are linked to particular kinds of social occasions, thus creating a link between the structure of what one would say and the social occasion where one might employ that structure. While these structuring heuristics might seem relatively static (as is often the claim made about Aristotle’s quite similar discussion of *taxis*), they were nonetheless widely recognized as inherently linked to invention as they appear in the earlier books of *The Rhetoric*, Books I and II. Most importantly, though, the special *topoi* seem to be echoed in Book III, forging a structural link between Aristotle’s discussion of invention, arrangement, and our social and civic spheres.

While the special *topoi* focused heavily on the means of argumentation in the social sphere, the common *topoi* more closely align with the canon of arrangement in that often these are viewed as forms. And if we accept evidence in Books I and II of Aristotle that conventional forms (the common *topoi*) are places where invention occurs. Why can we not recognize the same in Book III’s discussion of *taxis*?

Aristotle’s notion of the common topics undeniably recognizes a vacillation between invention and convention, and — in connection with the special topics — how the structure of our compositions is inherently linked to our social arrangements. In Chapter 23 of Book II, for example, Aristotle discusses 28 common *topoi* (these, again, are like forms). Each of the common *topoi* are what Kennedy calls “lines” or “strategies”

of argument (Aristotle 2.23; Kennedy 190). Topic 7, for example, focuses on offering “definition[s]” in speeches. Aristotle gives the following example: “What is the divine? Is it not either a god or the work of a god? Still whoever thinks it is the work of a god must also think that gods exist” (Kennedy 195). Here, Aristotle is demonstrating how asking a question in a speech can accomplish particular kinds of social work. The structure of question-asking is linked to a way of positioning audience and acting within the social. Aristotle goes on to give several more examples of topic 7, and he then states, “For all these [speakers], by making definitions and grasping the essence of a thing, draw syllogistic conclusions about the subject they are discussing” (Aristotle 2.23; Kennedy 195). Here, Aristotle suggests that the forms of question-asking function within the speech to help the audience form “conclusions.” The convention of the question is cemented with inventing the intended “conclusions” in the audience’s mind.

In another *topoi*, Topic 27, for example, Aristotle offers examples of how “to accuse or defend on the basis of mistakes that have been made” (Kennedy 203). Here again, Aristotle goes through and shows how conventional forms (the *topoi*) might be employed to invent within the social spheres we inhabit. Clearly, it is these conventions that afford invention. Now that I have discussed the common *topoi*, I want to turn to Kennedy’s discussion of arrangement or *taxis* in Aristotle. He states:

An effective speech follows a *structural pattern*; that is, it *consists of parts, each performing some function*, but joined together into an artistic unity ... *How these parts are arranged differs somewhat* with the conventions of public address in different societies, the occasion and the speaker’s perception of the audience’s

knowledge of the subject and attitude, and the speaker's individual ethos and style. (Kennedy 257; emphasis mine)

Here, in Kennedy's definition of *taxis*, we can see clear links to how Aristotle works with the concept of the *topoi* (especially the common *topoi*). Like in Aristotle's discussion of *topoi*, which are conventions employed based upon the social context and occasion, we see that arrangement is largely shaped by social convention as well. While the *topoi* seem to be more micro-level conventions (to perform very particular kinds of social work), *taxis* is drawing upon the same relationship between convention and invention, but doing so on a larger, more structural level. But both *topoi* and arrangement are linked to inventing for a particular audience on a particular occasion (through the discussion of the species of rhetoric in both places in *The Rhetoric*). The main difference between *taxis* and *topoi*, then, is that while the topics offer us a kind of moment-to-moment flexibility in the social occasion, the parts of the whole within *taxis* need to be "joined together into an artistic unity." But fundamentally, I argue, our consideration of *taxis* and *topoi* undeniably overlap: both rely on conventional structures as a means of communicating and inventing within our social and civic spheres.

If we accept that *The Rhetoric* offers us ways to link convention with invention through the process of arranging within the social, we can begin to see that the roots of arrangement are inextricably social in nature and tightly linked to inventional work. If we accept this as the case, then a classical view of invention (even an Aristotelian one) is not necessarily in opposition with convention (or arrangement) as some contemporary Critical rhetorical scholars might suggest. Instead, it is plausible that even in *The*

Rhetoric convention and invention are always in conversation, especially through the process of arrangement.

But in order to borrow back these classical notions of arrangement (and arrangement's ability to link convention and invention) we need to more fully deal with the weight of our history. Interestingly enough, while more traditional rhetorical scholars like Kennedy often view *taxis* as too conventional and *topoi* as the place of invention, there is often a wholesale dismissal by many in rhetoric and composition of *any* conventional patterns of arrangement (including Aristotle's *topoi*, or — as I'll discuss later in this section — Cicero's *dispositio*). That is, even the most clearly inventive places in classical rhetorical texts are often simply seen as relying too heavily on convention.

In her text, "Aristotle's 'Special Topics' in Rhetorical Practice and Pedagogy," Carolyn R. Miller discusses how style (the third rhetorical canon) became privileged during the Renaissance, thus relegating Aristotle's *topoi* to the margins of writing instruction. Miller explains that during that time, those teaching writing and the arts became so heavily invested in style that it took a toll on inventional aspects of composing like the *topoi*, which came to be seen as too mechanical. Below Miller describes the reception of *topoi* during that period:

The Renaissance revival of classical theory did not accord Aristotle's *Rhetoric* an important place, and the implications for Renaissance rhetorical practice of the distinction between common and special topics were left undeveloped. The use of topics tended to be quite mechanical, for several reasons: the greater interest in style than in invention, the elementary place of rhetoric in education, and the

influence of such authorities as Cicero at the expense of an empirical approach to practice. Special topics do appear as formulas for composing various genres, both oratorical and poetic, but there is no corresponding development of topical theory. Possibly the failure of recovered theory to engage contemporary practice provoked the subsequent rationalist criticism of theory. Peter Ramus assaulted rhetorical invention in general, and Bernard Lamy (identified with the Port Royalists) levelled an attack on the topics themselves (in *L'Art de ParZer*, 1676), an attack that was so destructive, according to Wilbur Samuel Howell, that nearly a century later John Ward's conventional treatment of topics (in *A System of Oratory*, 1759) required an "embarrassed apology for them as being useful to those without genius or opportunity to find stronger arguments by more direct investigation." (Miller 62-63)

Here Miller accounts for how during the 18th century *topoi*, and invention more broadly, were seen as less useful to composers than theories that approached the process of composing through the lens of style. This lack of historical development of the *topoi* left us few ways to understand the complexity between the canons (as these pertained to *topoi*). That is, because we spent a great portion of our history privileging style, and we are now heavily invested in pedagogies privileging invention, we have missed opportunities to carefully consider how these canons are linked.

But the lack of development of *topoi* during the Renaissance that Miller writes about, led to an interesting twist: as history goes on, Miller documents a link between *topoi* (the places of invention) and arrangement. Miller states, "In the 19th century, the

common topics became formalized as modes of arrangement, and the special topics remained outside rhetoric, as method, inquiry, and prerequisite knowledge of one's subject" (63). Ironically, then, despite our failure in classical rhetorical scholarship to see a connection between invention and arrangement, the history of writing instruction aligned the common topics (originally under the rhetorical jurisdiction of invention) as modes for arrangement. It is precisely this very shift in our history that, more than a hundred years later, slated the canon of arrangement in our contemporary field as at odds with invention. That is, our contemporary approaches to arrangement (those critiqued by Hartwell and Podis and Podis for being at odds with invention) were originally shaped, at least in part, by our approaches to Aristotelian *topoi* as places of invention. This means that contemporary scholars in our field have attacked arrangement for not affording attention to inventive work *because our approaches to arrangement had become linked too tightly to the conventions of invention itself* (or to conventional approaches to *topoi*). I suggest that this irony points out a problem not inherent to any one of the canons, but in our continued failure to draw relationships between the canons in our writing classroom. If we see invention, arrangement, and style (along with memory and delivery) as always in conversation with one another across the composing process, then we can understand how convention and invention are *always* in dialogue with one another throughout the process of composing.

Cicero's *Dispositio*: Conventional Forms as Sites of Invention

Like Aristotle's notion of *topoi*, there are many other concepts within rhetorical theory that link conventional forms or frameworks to invention. Cicero's concept of *dispositio*, for example, does exactly such work. Unlike the debates around Aristotle's theory, Cicero's concept of the *dispositio* better highlights the dialogue between convention and invention (and specifically does so by focusing in on the process of arrangement).

In his article, "Ciceronian *Dispositio* as an Architecture for Creativity in Composition: A Note for the Affirmative," Richard Enos traces the debate surrounding Cicero's seven-part organizational framework. The seven *dispositio*, Enos argues, propose a formal arrangement of a text without foreclosing invention. Like many criticisms throughout the 1980s and 1990s to teaching, for example, grammatical form within the composition classroom, Enos writes that Cicero's *dispositio* had been heavily critiqued for privileging conventional form, and thus supposedly stifling creativity and invention. In the midst of the 1980s, though, when critical pedagogy was at its height, Enos goes to great length — tackling the assumptions of Critical pedagogues — to defend the *dispositio* against arguments suggesting that the formal conventions of *dispositio* come at the expense of invention. Near the opening of his article, Enos cites several harsh critiques of Cicero's *dispositio*. He summarizes these as follows:

C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon's *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing* [posit that Cicero's] "six part" structuring of discourse is ... an artificial constraint denying creative thought and expression (56, 63). Knoblauch and

Brannon's opinion is shared by others, for even such a prominent historian of rhetoric as Donovan J. Ochs has criticized Cicero's "methodology for inventing matter and form" as "mechanical" (117). Lastly, and most recently, Irvin Hashimoto has called to question the limitations of structured heuristic procedures, advocating "a relaxed view of discovery" (79). These authors all focus on an issue central to the teaching of composition: are patterns of arrangement an aid to writing? Cicero's *dispositio* is the frequent illustration following a negative reply to this question, so it is only fitting to use his theories as an example for a positive response. In short, one step toward answering this question is to understand the nature of Cicero's pattern of arrangement and its relationship to invention. (Enos 108)

Here, Enos traces the ways that the Critical pedagogies prevalent in the field at the time of his writing often relied upon Cicero's concept of the *dispositio* as a straw man to attack teaching formal conventions of arrangement in the writing classroom. Enos' summary of attitudes in the field echoes the view of arrangement discussed in Part 1 of this chapter; Enos states that arrangement is characterized by its opponents as "mechanical," "artificial," and "denying of creative thought" (108). To combat the common line of argument utilized by Expressivists and Critical pedagogues that formal conventions forecloses invention, Enos launches a defense of the *dispositio* to reclaim Cicero's structure as what he calls an "architecture for creativity" (Enos 110).

By Enos' account, Cicero's conventional form, the *seven dispositio*, are indeed generative sites of invention. That is, Enos, a contemporary scholar of rhetoric, refuses

the mutually exclusive relationship between invention and convention, and suggests that through arrangement it is possible to capture a much more dynamic view of the writing process. Like my discussion of *topoi* above, Enos insists that the *dispositio* ultimately encouraged creativity rather than stifling it. The framework itself, of course, was not the invention — not an end in and of itself — but was instead the *site* of invention for rhetors. The form opened up room for rhetors to invent by responding to the structure of arrangement. Enos states:

Contrary to the reporting of Knoblauch and Brannon, Cicero established a seven (not six) part pattern for arranging compositions: *exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio*, *reprehensio*, an optional *digressio*, and *conclusio*) As a general reading of *De Inventione* will make apparent, within each of these seven divisions are internal components to further aid rhetors in creating and structuring their compositions within each respective division. *De Inventione* was written when Cicero was quite young, and he modified his pattern of arrangement significantly in *Partitiones Oratoriae* and encouraged great flexibility in structuring compositions to the limitations of the situation (*Partitiones Oratoriae* 9, 27).

(108)

Enos argues that Cicero's philosophy indeed accounted for invention and rhetorical flexibility. In discussing Aristotle's *topoi* above, I focused specifically on how we might link invention and convention through the frameworks of the common *topoi*. But this same case can be more easily made for Cicero's *dispositio*. While the *dispositio* are read as formal conventions (and are therefore ill at-ease with invention from a Critical

perspective), Cicero was more clearly using arrangement as a frame for invention, and therefore his theory offers less contested links to invention (and also style). I also want to focus on what Enos states in regards to the “flexibility” of the *dispositio*. Through arranging the parts of a composition, composers could invent toward specific social ends. That is, while the structuring of the *dispositio* seems fixed or static, it is the dependence of these parts on the nuances of the social that most tightly link the canon of arrangement to invention (and to creativity). Enos goes on to explain this relationship:

Cicero clearly saw his theories of *dispositio* as an architecture for creativity in composition. His extensive commentary on localized invention and the appropriateness of certain material within a particular place in a composition is consistent with rhetoric's *raison d'etre*: systems for structuring expression which are responsive to the peculiarities of situations. Adapting responses to exigencies is no more critical now than it was in antiquity. Such theories of *dispositio* as articulated by Cicero persisted for centuries and operate today precisely because they provide an architecture for bridging the gap between our thoughts and our expression of them. What was imprecisely characterized as a "constraint" is nothing less than a degree of freedom replacing unstructured, random thought masquerading as "creativity." (Enos 110)

Here, Enos offers us a clear and compelling case for how we might see the *dispositio* as sites of creativity. But I read Enos in this final passage making a point about our reading of classical texts more generally. He reminds us that while our society has shifted since classical Greek times, the fundamental aspects of composing have remained the same.

That is, considering forms always in relation to the social is simply at the heart of rhetorical approach. Therefore, it makes sense to read classical texts that seem to focus heavily on convention in relation to how we might, as Enos writes, recognize “localized invention” within those forms (110). In the last sentences by Enos here, he attacks our field’s move away from the conventions (or “constraints”) of arrangement in the name of invention (or what Enos is referring to here as “creativity”). Enos suggests that even “creativity” must have a structure. He suggests those in our field must embrace structure not a constraint, but as a means of expressing our purposes to others. Without structure, Enos suggests, we will be left with “random thought masquerading as ‘creativity’” (110). We see in these closing remarks critiques of a move in our field toward privileging the opening, exploratory, invention-based stages of composing over the aspects of the writing process that shape meaning. While Enos’ critique was launched during the 1980s, as I have argued throughout this project, his concerns are still relevant in our field today.

Quintilian’s *Imitatio*: Convention as a Means to Invention

While Enos’ argument about the Ciceronian concept of *dispositio* offers us a clear way to link convention to invention through the process of arrangement, the mutually exclusive view of invention and convention is perhaps most easily combated by the writings of Quintilian, who focuses on “*imitatio*” or imitation. The practice of imitation has been highly unpopular in our field today, and I’ll argue that we can explain imitation’s lack of popularity because it demands that we recognize a much more

complicated relationship between invention and convention than suits the tastes of those in the contemporary context of our field.

In the *Institutio Oratoria* Quintilian outlines a pedagogy that makes imitation central. Unsurprisingly, Quintilian's notion of imitation is often read as focusing too heavily on convention. By considering Quintilian's pedagogy, though, we can see the ways that the process of *imitatio* inherently (and importantly) links convention to invention through working carefully with form. That is, by imitating formal conventions of great works (or work by those Quintilian calls "geniuses"), one can eventually embark on the path toward invention. Quintilian writes the following about the important role of imitation in the production of art:

For there can be no doubt that in art no small portion of our task lies in imitation, since, although invention came first and is all-important, it is expedient to imitate whatever has been invented with success. And it is a universal rule of life that we should wish to copy what we approve in others. It is for this reason that boys copy the shapes of letters that they may learn to write, and that musicians take the voices of their teachers, painters the works of their predecessors, and peasants the principles of agriculture which have been proved in practice, as models for their imitation. We must, in fact, either be like or unlike those who have proved their excellence. [. . .] It is rare for nature to produce such a resemblance, which is more often the result of imitation. (Quintilian X.ii.1-2)

Here in Quintilian, we see a view of imitation — of "copying" — as the means of learning, and as the eventual means of creating "art." This view of imitation as an

efficient, “expedient” means for the invention of texts is likely one of the most extreme cases of blurring the lines between the convention and invention. According to Quintilian’s thinking in *Institutio Oratoria*, through the process of imitating, we gain access to inventing by working within conventional forms. Because I begin Chapter 3 with a discussion of imitation across the fields of rhetoric and composition and creative writing, I won’t go on much more here in this section on the works of Quintilian; however, it is important to note that the rhetorical act of imitation erases any distinctions we might draw between convention and invention (as conventions are necessary forms we must grapple with en route to inventing).

While it might seem promising that Quintilian offers us such a solid foundation for vacillating between invention and convention in the composing process, it is perhaps crucial to note that from a contemporary standpoint Quintilian has been heavily criticized, not only for promoting pedagogies that rely too heavily on imitation or convention (and are therefore considered rote, mechanical, and in opposition with criticality). The work of Quintilian itself is critiqued for producing texts that did not offer any originality of thought; Quintilian, many argue, is victim to his own imitative practice. He reproduces the old at the expense of crafting the “new.” His scholarship itself has often been accused of simply compiling and uncritically reporting the thoughts of others. In “I Have No Predecessor to Guide My Steps’: Quintilian and Roman Authorship,” John Logie argues that although Quintilian is often accused of synthesizing the earlier arguments of others, namely Cicero, his scholarship does offer us with a unique view of

the Roman author. Logie reviews several theorist's criticisms of Quintilian. George A. Kennedy, for example, states the following:

Quintilian is not quite so original as he implies. Almost all the topics had been discussed by earlier writers, but not necessarily in rhetorical treatises. [. . .]
 Quintilian's originality, here as elsewhere, consists primarily of synthesis and evaluation of earlier discussions in light of his own principles and experience and in terms of his resolve to view the orator as a whole. (123)

Here, Kennedy calls into question the "originality" that Quintilian claims within his treatise. However, Logie goes on to argue that Quintilian's text does, in fact, go beyond the claims he synthesizes (and that he does do so by claiming others' views as his own). In other words, Quintilian's originality as a rhetor is in that *he claims* originality, and therefore, Logie argues, paves the way for notions of Romantic authorship. Logie writes:

Quintilian's claims of originality and proprietary interest throughout his texts demonstrate that he is continually announcing himself as an author, in surprisingly modern terms Quintilian honors his own demand that the ideal rhetor move beyond quotation and canny arrangement of his predecessors' work.
 (353)

In defending Quintilian's claim to originality, Logie implies that the author's own application of his theory of the ideal rhetor demonstrates that Quintilian's view on imitation forges a link between invention and convention. I find Logie's point about Quintilian compelling in that it demonstrates that many in our field are predisposed to read classical rhetorical texts in ways that efface nuanced relationships between

convention and invention (in Quintilian's case, through the process of imitation), despite the fact that we can find evidence for such relationships.

Medieval Views on Arrangement:

Richard McNabb's Recovery of Juan Gil's Dictaminal Theory

I have spent a great deal of time establishing the relationship between invention and convention in the classical literature, but this link between invention and convention (as a means of engaging in the social and civic spheres) continues well beyond the classical period. As I stated earlier in the discussion of Miller's work, in later periods throughout Europe, the influence of Cicero and the rhetorical canon of style are privileged. However, here I want to turn toward an article describing the link between canons during the Middle Ages. In Richard McNabb's article, "To Father Juan, with Love, Bishop Alexander: Juan Gil De Zamora's Medieval Art of Letters", McNabb translates a letter-writing manual to outline principles for Juan Gil's *dictaminal* theory (McNabb 104). McNabb discusses various principles of Juan Gil's (e.g. the salutation, narration, petition, and conclusion) in to order flesh out how Gil conceives of the traditional canons of invention, arrangement, and style in ways that are ultimately linked (104). What is particularly interesting about McNabb's article is that he seems to recognize that the nuanced relationships between the canons are cemented within the particulars of social circumstance. McNabb writes:

According to traditional *dictaminal* theory, the social rank of the sender and recipient of the letter determine the arrangement of the *intitulatio* and *inscriptio*:

The superior person's name appears first followed by the inferior person's name. If

the writer and the recipient were of equal social rank, then either name may go first, although it was considered more polite to begin with the recipient's name (Constable 253). Social hierarchy, therefore, typically dictates the order of the salutation. (McNabb 108)

In the above passage we can see McNabb describing the canon of arrangement in its relation to the social. Unlike other letter-writing manuals of the time suggested, the manual by Gil proposed that one could not simply follow rote or mechanical rules for addressing a letter. Instead, addressing a letter requires knowledge of the social; simply through the ordering of names one enacts a kind of social hierarchy.

Another fascinating aspect of Gil's letter-writing manual was the way it seemed to encompass a more complex relationship between the rhetorical canons. McNabb describes, in particular, the relationship between the unpopular-at-the-time canon of invention and its relationship to arrangement and to style. He writes:

Because there was no need for argumentation in such letter-writing, any discussion of invention was unnecessary. Instead of offering suggestions for invention, letter-writing manuals provided numerous models for copying. As Murphy notes, many *dictatores* attempted to make letter-writing a skill that any person capable of copying individual letters could acquire: "[N]o command of artistic principles or rhetorical theory [was] necessary, and indeed even knowledge of the language [was] probably unnecessary" (259). Even so, there were a few attempts by such *dictatores* as Jean de Limoges, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and Bene da Firenze to make inventional theory a more important component of

the *ars dictaminis* (Camargo, *Ars dictaminis* 23). But, as Martin Camargo points out, these attempts "ran directly counter to the subsequent evolution of the art" described by Murphy ("Toward" 185). Most *dictaminal* theory ignored this rhetorical canon, focusing more exclusively on the elements of arrangement and style. Juan Gil, however, conceived of the letter slightly differently from his counterparts. For Juan Gil the chief aim of the letter was not just to command or even to establish a harmony of wills; it was to sway the reader to act favorably upon the sender's request. Although he does not explicitly develop a theory of persuasion, his discussion of the principal parts of the letter reflects a systematic approach to persuasion and to invention in particular. This approach, however, differs from that of Cicero and other classical rhetoricians on the art of invention. Instead of showing his readers how to invent their own letters by providing them with a set of topics to develop a line of reasoning, Juan Gil provides a generative method of varying content and style. Throughout the *DE*, he supplies the reader with an array of thematic sample phrases set off by brackets and commas that serve to indicate a number of possible variations when composing the different parts of the letter. In other words, Juan Gil is supplying not just a set of standard phrases to be recopied but also a framework for variations to these standard phrases to adapt to one's particular rhetorical purposes. Although such generative phrases are not part of a formal set of topics, they are still topical in the sense that they serve as raw material for constructing ethical appeals and emotional appeals. Put differently, these sample phrases are "places" from which a writer can turn to

create various appeals. The composition of a letter would thus entail the writer first identifying and selecting the appropriate topic(s) which are grouped thematically in the *DE* and then arranging and adorning the material properly. For Juan Gil then, the notion of invention becomes both a method of discovering what phrases are best suited for an audience as well as managing those phrases by selecting and arranging them for an audience. (116-117)

McNabb's description of Gil's letter-writing manual here clearly depends of collapsing invention with arrangement and style. While the sample phrases in the letter are places the writer can appeal to his or her audience, the success of these appeals fundamentally depends on considerations of style and arrangement. Although McNabb points out that Gil's rhetorical approach to letter writing was anomalous for its time, I wonder about how this rhetor's situated-ness during a transitional period in the history of rhetoric and the teaching of writing made it possible to see the nuanced relationship between the canons, rather than simply becoming beholden to the seeing the whole of the composing process as in service of one. Either way, manuals like Gil's evidence the fact that there is rhetorical precedent for linking convention with invention, and for carving out more nuanced relationships between the rhetorical offices.

**Melding Invention and Arrangement in the 18th and 19th Centuries:
Re-Dressing the Problems of Arrangement by Considering the "Methods" Approach**

As I have demonstrated throughout my discussion of the classical literature, arrangement was certainly an office within the rhetorical tradition that articulated invention with conventional forms. Yet, recall the problems discussed in Part 1 of this

chapter. In particular, recall Hartwell's review of our problematic pedagogies of arrangement throughout history, specifically what he calls the the methods approach. Hartwell described a "methods of development" approach focusing on "illustration, contrast, comparison, definition, and analysis" (Hartwell 549). Hartwell accused this approach to arrangement as being a "mechanical approach to form [that] ignores the primacy of content (549). Yet, what is interesting is that the categorization of the methods approach as an approach to arrangement seems rather arbitrary if we consider Sharon Crowley's description of the methods approach as an approach to invention. Crowley writes:

At this level of invention, called "method" by eighteenth-century theorists and "planning" by nineteenth-century textwriters, the composer attempts to order her material in accordance with the natural movement of the mind. Method is a concept as old as Aristotle and as recent as Sheridan Baker, yet its important role in the formulation of modern composition theory has not been widely recognized ... (Crowley 55)

Here, we see Crowley describe what, for Hartwell, is a current-day approach to arrangement as an approach to invention during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hence, while Hartwell and others critique methods-based approaches to arrangement for being too "mechanical" (Hartwell 549), we should keep in mind that these approaches were not intended as conventional, but rather the methods were seen as of intrinsic value in the process of invention. Crowley goes on to explain further that the methods approach was utilized during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not merely as a means of

invention in isolation, but as a means of articulating invention with arrangement. Crowley writes, “Now while method seems as though it ought to be studied as a function of arrangement rather than invention, for eighteenth-century theorists it was a property of both canons” (Crowley 55). It seems clear from considering the case of a methods approach to composing — along with the long historical trajectory of other forms that are thought to be at odds with invention today — that the distinctions we make between invention and conventions are just not that simple. While a contemporary perspective in our field sees fixed forms and conventional structures as resting in clear opposition with invention, the histories of these forms show that invention and convention are often much more tightly bound together.

Toward a Resolution: Addressing Arrangement’s Problems

Throughout Part 2, I have demonstrated that a re-reading of Aristotle and careful re-considerations of both Cicero and Quintilian reveal definite ways of understanding invention and convention as inherently linked (through the canon of arrangement or, in the case of Quintilian, through the concept of negotiating form in imitative practice). For Aristotle, invention and convention are linked through *taxis*, and especially through the common *topoi*. Additionally, the special topics offer us viable ways of linking the negotiation of conventions with invention through the social (the three species of rhetoric appear in both Books II and II). Similarly, we see a link between invention and convention (specifically through and arrangement) in Cicero’s concept of *dispositio*. And we see further evidence of the possibility of invention through working with convention

in Quintilian's reflection on *imitatio*. I have shown, as well, how the canons of rhetoric continue to collide during the Middle Ages and well into the 19th century. The problem, then, is not that there is an inherent lack of possibility in linking these rhetorical canons, rather it's that from our current perspective, it has been difficult to see and hear evidence of the necessity for breaking down the boundaries between invention and responding to convention in the composing process.

Undoubtedly, we have taken a very different trajectory in developing the concepts of convention and arrangement in our field today than was present during these earlier periods in our history. It is my hope that we might consider these classical texts as possibilities for helping us restore a rounder, fuller sense of convention and its relationship to invention *through* arrangement. While it seems unlikely that we can easily transplant these earlier views of texts and the composing process into the contemporary context of our field today, in the next section I turn toward an area of new media studies where we might begin to try and develop such views of invention as articulated to convention through arrangement. I will argue that because of the visibility of convention in new media, we will be able to develop a more nuanced sense of the composing process in our classrooms.

PART 3: Flash Forward: Reconsidering Remix, Resuscitating Arrangement

In the first chapter of this project, I charted how the office of invention has been privileged in Expressivist and Critical pedagogical scholarship. I have suggested that

invention is centrally linked to how we have come to theorize “access” over the past several decades (one can achieve access by inventing or creating, or through what I have call the “inventional portal”). Our preoccupation with invention, of course, has limited our interest in arrangement and the other rhetorical offices. And the theoretical weight of invention has been so great in our field that our work with new media and multimodal texts — like much else, unsurprisingly — has accordingly been limited. That is, we’ve been interested in new media texts mostly in relation to their potential for fostering invention or the “new.” In even beginning to consider what it might mean to rebalance our attention — to resuscitate arrangement in our pedagogies — we need to find a place in our field where arrangement can be somewhat readily visible. I argue that our field’s concept of “remix” is one such place.

Part 3 turns to address some of our field’s most contemporary scholarship on “remix.” I posit how we might use a new lens of arrangement (a lens that I developed by turning to classical and medieval texts in the previous section) to link invention with convention in our new media classrooms today. Specifically, I suggest that “remix” is a concept that lends itself well to helping us resuscitate a focus on arrangement (and the rest of the writing process that extends beyond invention, really). If we can acknowledge a link between what is new and what has come before it, then invention is always a kind of re-mixing (well, before re-mix was “a thing,” that is). There is, of course, one hang-up: despite the ways that “remix” easily lends itself to discussions about arrangement, I will demonstrate that we have incorporated “remix” in our field almost solely through the lens of invention. In Part 3 I will demonstrate that by structuring remix into our classrooms

through the lens of arrangement, we can link invention and convention by extending our usual focus beyond invention and into the rest of the composing process.

The *Very Old New*?: Theorizing the Drive Toward “Newness” in New Media

In the past several decades, the word “remix” has increasingly come into mainstream usage; however, few compositionists within our field would have predicted that a word often associated with contemporary audio and visual technologies would hold a central place at the 2010 Conference on College Composition and Communication. The call for papers entitled “The Remix: Revisit, Rethink, Revise, Renew,” for many, underscored the increasingly prominent position of digital technologies and new media in rhetoric and composition studies. By considering “The Remix,” the call for papers asked about the ways that we might “revisit, rethink, revise [and] renew” our own field and the practices of teaching writing with new insights and toward new ends.

However, despite the glossy newness often associated with a technological term like “remix,” I will suggest here that the appropriation of this term has actually been taken up within our field in ways that do little to see the teaching of writing in historically different or new ways. Ironically, the term “remix,” I suggest, has gained a central position within rhetoric and composition particularly because of the ways it seems to uphold our tradition of a continued focus on “the new”— on Critical, inventional work — that has actually long been the central aim of Critical pedagogues (scholars who were writing toward this agenda long before “remix” or new media entered into our field).

It is precisely our insistent focus on how remix allows us to maintain our fixation on the “new” that is hindering a more productive revision of our field’s practices: a revision that would look beyond the “new” and to the whole of the writing process and its interrelated and inherently linked parts. While we have often utilized the term “remix” as an opportunity to argue for new kinds of inventional work, we have failed to consider how this term might be useful in considering other aspects of the composing process. Namely, I’ll suggest here, we have failed to consider how remix is a particularly useful tool for thinking about issues of arrangement and arrangement’s inherent relationship to the dynamic movement between convention and invention.

My main goal throughout this section is to claim that we are taking up the theoretical and practical possibilities of remix only at the most surface level due to our focus mainly on invention at the expense of other aspects of the writing process. Ultimately, I suggest, if we don’t reconsider remix within our field we’ll miss out on the opportunity to attend to one of the most important aspects of what remix affords us: a chance to think about the dynamic relationships between shaping and arranging the forms and conventions of texts and inventing critical ideas and new meanings (or, put more simply, the dynamic relationship between convention and invention). Remix affords us a chance to encourage our students to move toward more productive, richer revisions of their texts. It provides them with an opportunity to gain a more nuanced sense of how the choices they make in their composing processes affect what they are able to say and who they are able to become in their communities.

Toward a Redefinition of Remix: Moving Beyond the New

The concept of remixing texts, of course, potentially affords us an opportunity to think about them in a number of ways that span the composing process. In this section, though, I'm interested in discussing how our field has utilized the concept of remix mainly for its inventional qualities that can be recognized through an insistent focus on the "new." I will go on to argue that we need to supplement this limited understanding of remix by reconsidering it. We must move toward a recognition of remix as a composing strategy that creates the "new" by negotiating and manipulating textual forms through processes of arrangement and rearrangement. That is, to remix something is always to reinvent because of the ways that, through invention, we are perpetually rearranging and reworking form. This view of remix, of course, draws upon a resuscitated concept of arrangement; it recognizes the vacillation between convention and invention as a means of producing texts.

It is crucial to note that remixing does not stop with inventional work. Instead, remix draws both the composer and audiences' attention to the ways that rearranging a text is always linked to reinventing it. Therefore, by acknowledging remix more fully, we are acknowledging not just remix's potential to create the "new," but its potential to create the "new" *always in relationship* to arrangement. We can create the "new" only because we have found new possible arrangements. We might think here of Walter Benjamin's observation that "All great works of literature either dissolve a genre or invent one." A text that is "great," by many standards, must do inventional work; yet, it is the tension between dissolution and invention of a genre, for me, that seems to

underscore Benjamin's recognition of the fundamental relationship between arrangement and invention. While Benjamin's quote could be read to mean that these greats works either dissolve or invent a genre, I might suggest that works dissolving ultimately invent and, likewise; new inventions also dissolve other more conventional forms. It is this articulation between invention and the shaping and arranging of new forms and new genres that seems most absent from our field in general, and, by extension, in our field's current conception of "remix."

The role of the "new" in remix becomes clear from a glance across our field. Catherine Latterell's textbook entitled "Remix: Reading and Composing Culture" has been received with much enthusiasm and is now in its third edition. Remix, like new media and digital concepts in our field more generally, is increasingly gaining steam in our most central journals, too. In his article, "Institutional Dimensions of Academic Computing," Stuart Selber states that "remixed production [is] the sampling of existing content to create *new* texts for *new* contexts" (18; emphasis mine). Our centralized focus on the "new" or on invention is so prevalent in our concept of remix that Selber mentions it twice in his definition. Moreover, notice the focus on newness in the promotion of Latterell's textbook:

Rethink the everyday, and make something *new!* ... With a mix of humor and analysis, a collection of *fresh* readings, lively assignments, and an enticing design, ReMix is not your ordinary textbook. It asks students to re-examine everyday concepts (such as identity, entertainment, and technology); to question assumptions about everyday life and culture; and to respond *critically and*

creatively to some of the most *imaginative* projects you'll find in a composition reader.

Built on the idea that students live in a do-it-yourself world in which they are the writers, designers, and *inventors*, ReMix invites students to bring their own *creativity* into the composition classroom. It inspires them to ask: Why do I think the way I do? What is my relationship to the culture around me? Am I truly, as one advertisement claims, "my playlist"? This *question-posing approach* allows students to write about culture and identity in a meaningful way. (Latterell back cover; emphasis mine)

Here, we see the terms "new," "fresh," "critically," "creatively," "imaginative," "creativity," and, finally, "inventors" and "question-posing approach." As I have discussed throughout Chapter 1 of this project, all of these terms are absolutely central to pedagogies adapting a Critical model of thinking. We can clearly see echoes of Freire's "banking concept" in the endorsement on the back cover of Latterell's book by Deborah Kirkman from the University of Kentucky. Kirkman states, "ReMix encourages students to take an *active, creative role* rather than *simply applying the received wisdom* of 'expert' cultural critique" (Latterell back cover; emphasis mine). The "creative" activity that Kirkman ascribes to students is clearly in opposition to the "received wisdom of the 'expert' cultural critique," and it becomes apparent how the practices in remix are simply intended to eschew convention in the name of creativity, the critically "new," and invention.

To get a greater sense of the privileging of inventional work in connection to remix, let's return to the 2010 Conference on College Composition and Communication's Call for Papers that defines "remix" in the following way:

Whether it's taking the old and making it fresh and *new* or taking the current and giving it a different spin, to remix a thing is to try and make it better. In our 61st year, after decades of innovative teaching and cutting-edge scholarship, the CCCC remix provides us with a way to revisit, rethink, revise, and *renew* our vision for the future of our field. The remix is not only about knowing what works but also being forward thinking enough to imagine *new* combinations and collaborations. Keeping the elements of the remix in mind, I encourage you to look closely at our field and figure out the spaces where we can make *new* connections, the spaces where we can flip the old into something *new*. (2010 College Composition and Communication Call for Papers; emphasis mine)

Notice, here in the call for papers the number of times "new" is mentioned: 5 times within only a few sentences. Within the call, the word "new" is often bound to the process of remixing something. However, what is most bothersome about the use of the "new" in this call, is that there is no explicit acknowledgement of the way that the influence of Critical theory or Critical and Materialist pedagogies have sustained traditions that have long valued new forms, and new structures. As I have shown in Chapter 1, even much before the focus on remix, a great deal of the scholarship within our field privileged invention and the creation of the "new," or revered the act of breaking from traditional forms, structures, and conventions. I'm concerned here with how we are

invited to think of the “new” in relation to new media work. While digital and new media work is indeed a new “area” or “topic” within our field, this area seems to be co-opted to do the work of more dominant theories within rhetoric and composition: the theories of Critical pedagogy and Materialism. What other threads might we pull from the concept of remix — or from new media work more generally — that might be more useful to an actual remixing of our classrooms? I argue that arrangement is one such thread, and an important one that is afforded practically no attention in this call for papers. With the exception of words that could point us in a vague direction toward arrangement – words like “spin” or “combinations” – arrangement is practically invisible in our field’s description of “remix.”

Since the Cs conference focused heavily on remix, there have been a number of publications that have also focused on this concept for its inventional work. Even those like Kathleen Blake Yancey, a scholar of new media, seem to hone in on the inventional qualities of remix without attending to issues of arrangement (or arrangement in connection to invention). Note below that Yancey offers a Wikipedia definition of “remix” in her 2009 article. But while the Wikipedia entry includes attention to arrangement’s role in remix, in her reframing of her own definition Yancey, perhaps unsurprisingly, focuses on remix’s potential for invention without acknowledging arrangement at all. Yancey cites Wikipedia here:

A remix is an alternative version of a song, different from the original version (Remix, 2008). A remixer uses audio mixing to compose an alternate master recording of a song, *adding or subtracting elements, or simply changing the*

equalization, dynamics, pitch, tempo, playing time, or almost any other aspect of the various musical components. Some remixes involve substantial changes to the arrangement of a recorded work, but many are subtle, such as creating a “vocal up” version of an album cut that emphasizes the lead singer’s voice. A song may be remixed to give a song that was not popular a second chance at radio and club play, or to alter a song to suit a specific music genre or radio format. Remixes should not be confused with edits, which usually involve shortening a final stereo master for marketing purposes. (Yancey 5; emphasis mine)

Notice that the Wikipedia definition of remix affords attention to the various elements of a text and how the processes of remixing these elements involve manipulating or negotiating their forms in an effort to invent the new. First, note that we are told that remixing involves “adding or subtracting elements,” or “changing the equalization, dynamics, pitch, tempo, playing time, or almost any other aspect of the various musical components.” The mention of these various aspects of the text, of course, already nuance how the processes of remixing contribute to the creation of the new. Yet, even better, the definition explicitly states that remix involves either “substantial” or “subtle” changes “to the arrangement.” Additionally, toward the end of the cited Wikipedia entry, we get a nod to how the remixing of a text might rearrange it to “suit a specific music genre or radio format,” thus acknowledging the ways that the earlier mentioned changes to the arrangement of a text work to shift what that text *is*, or work to reinvent it for particular audiences.

Given the Wikipedia entry that Yancey cites quite early in her article, one might assume that we are positioned perfectly as readers to engage with the fuller potential of remix that moves beyond inventional work. But then, Yancey takes an interesting turn. She goes on to, in her own words, position remix in the following way:

Seen through a wider lens, however, remix — the combining of ideas, narratives, sources — *is a classical means of invention*, even (or perhaps especially) for canonical writers. For example, again as noted in Wikipedia, Shakespeare arguably “remixed” classical sources and Italian contemporary works to produce his plays, which were often modified for different audiences. Nineteenth century poets also utilized the technique. Examples include Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” which was produced in multiple, highly divergent versions, and John Keats’ “La Belle Dame sans Merci,” which under-went significant revision between its original composition in 1819 and its republication in 1820. (“Remix”) ... *In sum, remixing, both a practice and a set of material practices, is connected to the creation of new texts.* (Yancey 6; emphasis mine)

Despite the many components of a text that have to be negotiated and manipulated—that have to be rearranged in order to invent — Yancey simply states here that remixing is “a classical means of invention” or that it is “connected to the creation of the new.” Instead of taking up the ways that the rearrangement of a text is central to the process, and is inherently tied to invention, the stress in Yancey’s definition is that remix is focused almost exclusively on the new. The question here is why is remix’s capability for attending to invention of the new so important to our field? Why, when taking up remix, a

term often thought to be associated with multimodal and new media work, are we so fixated on remix's connection to a concept in our field that has been around for much longer, and is centrally aligned with Critical priorities? Unfortunately, it seems like our operative sense of remix is little more than a buzz term that allows us to selectively take up new media and digitality without grappling with the more complex ways in which these new tools and ideas might carry with them some possibilities for thinking about the composing of texts in ways that could complicate, extend, or supplement the long-standing theories in our field like Critical pedagogies and materialism.

Stuart Selber takes a slightly different perspective on remix. He claims that remix practices in the academy, “[enjoy] little (if any) explicit support” (18). Selber argues that, “One can engage in remixed production, but the institution does not acknowledge it (18). The problem that Selber describes here, I argue, is related to our insistence on seeing remix only in relation to the new. By failing to value the conventional aspects of a remixed text (and by failing to see remix as an act of arrangement), I have discussed throughout this chapter that we are maintaining a privileging on invention that forecloses a fuller, richer view of the composing process. Yet, despite the challenges that remix seems to face in our field, it is undeniably an act of arrangement, and an act that centralizes and validates the role of convention (in relation to invention) in the composing process.

In order to revise these attitudes in our own field, I suggest that we tackle some of these problems head on by looking back to the concept of imitation. Imitation, I argue, shares much in common with “remix.” Both imitation and remix involve taking existing

forms and shifting, rearranging and, necessarily reinventing them. I believe that if we can get to the heart of what Critical pedagogues feared with imitation-based pedagogies, we can better address why and how remix has become positioned within our field as it is currently. We can then reposition attempt to reclaim remix as means not only for invention, but for interacting with texts and composing across the writing process.

CHAPTER 3

Borrowing Approaches to Conventional Form, Laying the Foundations for a Pedagogy of Persistence

In Chapter 2, I posited that we might construct the mediational portal of access by resuscitating classical notions of arrangement in our own field. But there are other options for building the mediational portal into our classrooms if we are willing to turn outside of our field for guidance. Namely in this chapter, I argue that the field of rhetoric and composition could use some assistance from creative writing, a field that has historically paid better attention to how texts are shaped and arranged (creative writing has afforded more attention to what we might call a text's "form"). This chapter initially explains some key differences between approaches to the forms and conventions of texts by those in the fields of rhetoric and composition and creative writing. The chapter culminates in three aspects of form we might "borrow" from creative writing in order to begin rejuvenating some attention to form and convention in our own field. The three borrowings I propose later in this chapter will then assist in laying the foundation for an approach to teaching composition that I will call "A Pedagogy of Persistence." I will flesh out the specifics of that pedagogy in my final chapter.

PART 1: Considering Key Differences, Varying Approaches to Form

As I have discussed, the mediational portal of access I proposed in Chapter 1 requires that we view formal conventions in relationship to invention. But because we don't have very developed notions of convention or form in our contemporary field, here

I will look to work in creative writing to augment our sense of the role of conventional forms. Yet, transplanting such concepts into our own field will require a prerequisite examination of the relationship between definitions of “form” operating in the two fields. Similar to “convention,” the term “form” is hardly ever referred to in our contemporary discussions about pedagogy in rhetoric and composition. Yet, “form” is a term that has taken center-stage in the fields of creative writing and art. The problem with this term, though, is that “form” is seen as so fundamentally tied to the work of creative writers, that it is often referred to in a vast number of ways. Often in craft talks, writers won’t address “form” as a whole, but will talk about specific craft techniques (e.g. pacing, structure, character development or theme) and how those conventions function in ways particular to a text or a set of texts. In other words, as I see it anyway, when writers talk about aspects of their craft, they are almost *always* talking about form; yet, they are doing so in highly nuanced ways that presume an approach to form that those of us in rhetoric and composition simply don’t share. As I stated in Chapters 1 and 2, our field has moved away from notions of conventional forms altogether. Therefore, it will be difficult for us to easily “borrow” back notions of form that exist in creative writing today. To be clear, I’m saying that because creative writers have a much longer tradition of talking about form (and talking about it in ways that are more developed), it will be challenging for those in our field to transplant such conversations into rhetoric and composition *without first addressing the central differences between how we think about form in the first place*. Hence, Part 1 of this chapter is intended to do such work. Initially, I attempt to make clear where our thinking in rhetoric and composition has led us with “form,” and in

the final section here I review the imitation debates between the fields to define form in both contexts.

Challenges to Addressing “Form” and “Arrangement” in Rhetoric & Composition: A Brief Overview

Much like the concept of “arrangement” in rhetoric and composition today, it seems that whenever there is an emergence of attention to “form” within our field, there is a recognition among scholars that we lack the histories and tools to do justice to formal work. In Anne Frances Wysocki’s article, “Impossibly distinct: On form/content and word/image in two pieces of computer-based interactive multimedia,” Wysocki describes the tradition of splitting form from content. Wysocki states that we “assume content is separate from form, writing from the visual, information from design, word from image” (138). While Wysocki takes up this split in relation to multimodal compositions, there are a number of examples in the history of our field that have demonstrated a turn away from form and convention in favor of what Wysocki calls “content” in her passage above. In an article on creative non-fiction, Wendy Bishop (2003) writes, “[W]orkshop-oriented compositionists, in our move to focus on the *content* and thinking in student essays, have too long now turned our attention away from the teaching of aspects of craft” (257; emphasis mine). What Bishop is describing here is the consequence of the theoretical split that Wysocki notes above: a split between *form* (or what Bishop indirectly refers to as “craft,” often thought of as the “working of form”) and *content*. If we see form as separate from content (and Wysocki and Bishop both argue that we do), then it becomes possible to see content as primary and form as merely

ornamental, artistic, and otherwise extractable from a critical content or idea. Form then becomes unnecessary and superfluous in our composition writing pedagogies. But moreover, too much time teaching forms, whether they be grammatical forms or the forms of arrangement, are seen as detracting from the “real” work of composition (Rose 1980; Sommers 1982; Harris 1997) .

The distinction between form and content, and the subsequent privileging of content that Bishop describes, has left our field bankrupt of ways of talking about “form.” Hence, alongside each respective body of scholarship within rhetoric and composition that *has* turned its attention toward form at all — scholarship on grammar, narrative and, most recently, multimodal and new media studies (Bridwell-Bowles 1992; Daniell 1999; Green 2003; Eldred 2005) — we often encounter essays and articles that lean on the field of creative writing as a means to augment and complicate our field’s sense of this work (Bishop 2003; Hesse 2010).

Yet, decades after the initial calls to pay more attention to textual form within rhetoric and composition, it seems that our notions of “form” have remained relatively unchanged. That is, despite the generations of rhetoric and composition scholars that have recognized the usefulness of the operative notions of form within creative writing, it seems that we have been largely unsuccessful in appropriating aspects of these purportedly richer, more nuanced senses of form for our own uses. This raises several questions: What are the operative notions of form within creative writing that scholars within rhetoric and composition have historically found so appealing? How might we come to a clearer understanding of these senses of form and translate them into our own

field (which, of course has differing theoretical and professional goals and agendas)? Finally, given the difficulty of shifting the isolated, rather flat sense of form in rhetoric and composition today (despite our many past attempts to borrow notions of “form” from creative writing), to what extent is the translation of these particular notions of “form” even possible (especially given creative writing’s status as a field interested in crafting art as opposed to the “content-driven” social goals of those working within the field of rhetoric and composition)?

I argue that if those working within our field today sincerely hope to borrow aspects of the kinds of approaches to form seen within creative writing classrooms and workshops (to the extent that is possible), we need to accomplish two tasks: 1) We need to understand how our approaches to “form” fundamentally differ from the approaches of those in creative writing; and 2) We need to isolate several aspects of creative writers’ approach to form that we want to borrow, and specifically (and with more nuance) attempt to understand how we might begin to do that work.

This chapter culminates in three proposed “borrowings” from the field of creative writing. But before I propose those, I’d like to offer an admittedly brief and quite simplified overview of task one above. In order to show differences between notions of form in creative writing and composition, I turn to the debates about imitation. These debates will clarify the obstacles those in our field face around the term “form.” My discussion of “form” here is merely an extension of conversations I introduced earlier in Chapters 1 and 2 (namely, the conversation about “form” here echoes our views on convention I discussed earlier). But I want to talk specifically about the concept of

“form” (which I did not do earlier), because a discussion of the particularities of form will help us understand how we might borrow aspects of creative writing pedagogy into our own curriculums. Because creative writers have been less explicitly interested in convention or arrangement, it makes sense to attempt to borrow from the field of creative writing through the lens of “form.” But I want to underscore that it is precisely the formal approaches in creative writing that I feel might certainly translate to how we think about convention and arrangement in our own field, and might help us move away from some of the constraints we’ve set around those terms.

The Imitation Debates: Revealing the Central Differences in “Form”

We fill pre-existing forms and when we fill them we change them and are changed.
—Frank Bidart, “Borges and I”

Because the term “form” is related to a wide swath of other terms in both rhetoric and composition and creative writing, it is impossible to easily compare and contrast definitions between the fields. However, I suggest that we can get a general sense of how both fields define the notion of form if we are willing to look at vastly different views on the practice of imitation. We can define form through imitation, I argue, because imitative practice positions form as central: by imitating a writer interacts with a form and style and through that interaction is supposed to become capable of inventing something of her or his own. In creative writing pedagogy, like the arts, imitation is looked upon favorably and, as I’ll show later, imitation is alive and well in that field today. However, since Critical, process models of composing entered into our field, imitation is a concept that is likely even more problematic than “convention” in rhetoric and composition. In their

article, “Apologies and Accommodations: Imitation and the Writing Process,” Frank Farmer and Phillip K. Arrington state, “Composition's ‘official line’ [is] that imitation is incompatible with process approaches to the teaching of writing” (27). While Farmer and Arrington go on to offer much evidence to the contrary suggesting the usefulness of imitation in the contemporary composition classroom, their article in defense of imitation makes clear that during the period within which they wrote (the article was published in 1993), imitation was viewed by many as being under attack. They write:

Imitation has long been a method and theoretical basis for rhetorical instruction. It has also enjoyed a complex, if not always glorious, history – a lineage which extends from the apprenticeship of sophists in Plato's Greece to the moral education of orators in Quintilian's Rome; from the nurturing of abundant expression in a Renaissance text by Erasmus to the cultivation of taste in an Enlightenment text by Hugh Blair. In the last few decades, however, we have witnessed dramatic changes in how we look upon imitation – changes largely influenced, we think, by the “process movement,” with its various emphases on invention and revision, expression and discovery, cognition and collaboration. In the wake of shifting so much of our attention to writing processes, we might well expect imitation to have been pronounced as dead as Nietzsche's God was a century ago. (Farmer and Arrington 12)

Farmer and Arrington point out a shift in our thinking in regard to imitation (and form) over the last several decades. In my earlier chapter, I attempted to document a similar shift in regard to convention (and the practices we recognize as affording access).

Unsurprisingly, then, I argue that imitation has remained highly unpopular and that its status (like the status of its counterpart concepts of “arrangement” and “convention” that I discussed previously) have remained at the very outskirts of our field because of the increased prevalence of the role of invention in our central theories. Today, even when it might be useful or most efficient to call on our imitative traditions, we often fail to do so. Notice during my discussion of “remix” in Chapter 2, for example, that scholars in the field seem to refuse to view a remix as a kind of imitation, although I would suggest that remixing a text might be easily (and fruitfully) be viewed through this lens¹⁹.

Farmer and Arrington also point out in the quote above that our histories include rich and useful approaches to imitation. Recall that in Chapter 2, I wrote about Quintilian’s notion of *imitatio*, or imitation as means of linking invention with convention. While I demonstrated that in Greek and Roman society conventions did not close down invention, consider next how Christy Friend characterizes imitation-based education during the Roman period. Friend, who writes from the perspective of a contemporary Critical pedagogue, sets imitation in direct opposition to inventive work and the knowledge that students bring to the classroom. Friend writes:

Certainly, fear of indoctrinating students would not have been a concern for Roman teachers, since the rhetorical curriculum since Isocrates' time had been grounded upon precept and imitation of traditional texts. While some teachers, including Quintilian, advocated encouraging limited student initiative (2.5.5-6), the idea that students should choose the topics or positions they wished to argue

¹⁹ I would explain this omission with the fact that we are trying to adhere “remix” to the “new” or to invention, while imitation is tightly tied to convention.

would have struck most classical educators as pedagogically irresponsible.

Because the disciplines of rhetoric and composition in this century have been centrally preoccupied with democratizing classroom power relations and honoring the language and knowledge that students bring to the classroom, teachers today must explore these important questions of power beyond the limited resources the declamatory tradition offers. (317; emphasis mine)

It is clear in Friend's passage that she views the act of imitation as fundamentally at odds with the goals of our field. She implies that while teachers today are concerned about "power," those working within the declamatory tradition (presumably because of their adherence to imitation) are uninterested in inventive work or social power structures. It seems, then, that neither contemporary *or* classical approaches to imitation as seen by those in our field today are looked upon favorably.

Nicholas Delbanco's creative writing textbook, *The Sincerest Form*, however, seems to view the practice of imitation in similar ways to the classical scholarship. That is, from the perspective Delbanco offers, it seems as if imitation does not foreclose invention or creative work, but rather could be a possible means to such. In the introduction to his textbook Delbanco states the following about the process of imitation as a model for teaching writing:

We learn by the example of others to walk and dress and brush our teeth and play tennis or the violin; it's the way we learn to spell and drive and swim. It's the way we first acquire language and, later, languages...In every act of reading there's an agreement, however unspoken, that we follow where the author leads;

the very act of printing books consists of repetition. And if what we study is writing, it's surely how we learn to write; all writers read all the time. (Delbanco xxi).

Delbanco's point here, in the opening of his textbook, is that imitation is a way of learning that occurs across practices and activities and thus, perhaps naturally, is a sensible way to teach writing. Critical pedagogues like Friend would likely reject Delbanco's positioning of student writers as those in need of development just as they would reject D'Angelo's positioning of student writers in his article on imitation published earlier in our own field (before the rise of Critical pedagogies). D'Angelo writes:

The student who has nothing to draw upon except his own meager store of stylistic resources must, slowly and painfully, stumbling and fumbling, plod his weary way through all of the embryonic phases that are characteristics of an evolving style. The student who imitates, however, may be spared at least some of the fumbblings of the novice writer. Quite often, as in the case of close imitation, his writing will be in a state of complete development. The student who imitates, in fact, becomes free from the obligation to laboriously follow the wasteful processes of slow evolutionary development. (283)

Both Delbanco and D'Angelo's texts could be read to position student writers as novices and to view writing as a linear process of development (we see this with Delbanco's description of other kinds of imitative learning that occurs during childhood, and we see it much more clearly in D'Angelo's explicit use of the word "novice" and discussion of

the “evolutionary process” and of the “embryonic” stage). Yet, remember, both of these writers seem to leave room for the practice of imitation as one that can and does perform useful work. But there seems to be a key difference here between D’Angelo and Delbanco’s views: while for Delbanco imitation is a means to generative, creative work, D’Angelo seems to relegate imitative practice as merely developmental or precursory to the real work of writing (which presumably comes much later).

Aside from Delbanco, there are number of other examples in creative writing that clearly link imitation and invention. In Bartholomew Brinkman’s “Imitations, Manipulations and Interpretations: Creative Writing in the Critical Classroom,” Brinkman attempts to reconcile the imitative practice he learned in the field of creative writing and to apply such practice in the Critical literature classroom. Brinkman describes his use of imitation in his Critical classroom when he states:

I have employed several kinds of imitations and manipulations in my classes.

On the most basic level, I have asked students to simply mimic a literary element or device; often, I have extended this practice to the imitation of a full poem or fictional scene or to variations on a particular textual form such as the sonnet. In addition to encouraging imitations, I have challenged students to manipulate texts as well, as when I ask them to rewrite a poem or a scene from one author in the style of another: Wallace Stevens’ “The Snow Man” in the dialect-heavy style of Langston Hughes; a sparse scene by Ernest Hemingway in the paid-by-the-word loquaciousness of Charles Dickens. This is only a small sampling of possible imitation and manipulation exercises — that I encourage instructors to use,

augment and transform to best serve their particular students and course objectives — but it begins to point to what is possible with creative pedagogy. Imitations and manipulations help students to transition from passively accepting the importance of poetic elements to actively discovering their necessity.

(Brinkman 160)

In describing his use of imitation in the classroom, Brinkman claims that imitation is compatible with creative work. He argues that imitation leads students away from “passively accepting the importance of poetic elements” and encourages them instead “to actively [discover] their necessity” (160). Brinkman says little on how students might thwart conventions or shift such “elements” for use in their own art, but what is interesting here is that Brinkman clearly sees a compatibility between Critical models of education and imitative practice in the classroom. Moreover, many more mainstream creative writing approaches to imitation (that don’t make concessions for toward a Critical model) claim outright that imitation is easily married to inventive, creative, and generative work. Imitation is a valid means of producing one’s *own* ideas (Delbanco 2003; Lim 2003; Everett 2005; Oostrum 2007).

I have argued in previous chapters that a Greek and Roman approach to imitation is compatible with invention. And in the writings of Delbanco and Brinkman from the field of creative writing, we can see a similar kind of attitude. However, at the very best in our field, we have representations of imitation as a developmental approach to writing by those like D’Angelo, and at worst we have a preponderance of arguments that argue that imitation is “a practice deemed incompatible with process approaches to the teaching

of writing,” and is therefore at odds with invention and criticality (Farmer and Arrington 23). I suggest that these differences in attitudes about invention can be boiled down to differences in each respective field’s view of “form.”

Note that Brinkman’s title includes the terms “imitation” *and* “manipulation.” I argue that Brinkman’s choice to frame his pedagogy in this way reveals a key difference in how “form” is viewed from a Critical perspective that has become pervasive in rhetoric and composition. From this view, imitation does not encompass manipulation, rather it is rote and connotes almost no change from the original. Hence Brinkman uses the language “manipulation” to connote the possibility for shifts in form and structure, and to therefore make room alongside the work of imitation for work that is more generative in nature.

Likewise, a “form,” for those in our field, is defined as a fixed, already-invented structure that is simply, as Patrick Hartwell mentioned in Chapter 2, “filled” with meaning. Forms are understood as static, as un-alterable, and therefore the majority of those in our field see the work of imitation as frighteningly at odds with invention, creativity, and discovery. But for creative writers, imitation clearly is understood to encompass manipulation. And this is because of something I mentioned in the epigraph to this section. In his prose poem “Borges and I” Frank Bidart writes, “We fill pre-existing forms and when we fill them we change them and are changed.” Bidart’s point here about “form” is evident in the attitudes of creative writers toward imitation. It is relatively impossible to imitate a form without inventing anew, and this is because forms are always linked to invention; convention is inextricably bound to invention. While I have made this case in the context of my other chapters, I argue here that our unwillingness to draw

tighter links between form (or convention) and invention is the reason we have been unsuccessful in borrowing aspects of creative approaches to “form” into our discipline. In the next section, then, I briefly propose a few places we might look to borrow from creative writing, but ultimately I want to suggest that unless we are willing to thoroughly redress our sense of “form,” these borrowings will be fruitless.

PART 2: The Three “Borrowings”

In the last section, I suggested that the views of imitation by creative writers and scholars of rhetoric and composition make apparent quite different views of “form.” Keeping those differences in mind, in this section I suggest three “borrowings” that might help move our sense of form in rhetoric and composition further toward the view offered in creative writing. By doing so, I argue that we can gain a view of form and convention that is better linked to invention or to “content,” as both Bishop and Wysocki seem to suggest would be advantageous for our field. Specifically here, I suggest that some of the thinking on “form” in creative writing is particularly valuable in helping us consider the social aspects of composing.

The first borrowing, I will suggest, should be to turn back to the work of Russian formalists to extend formal aspects of the term “arrangement” in our own field today. In the next borrowing, I suggest we might turn toward texts that practically treat the concept of form in more visible and conscious ways. Here, I’ll draw on contemporary literary examples that do such work. These examples are indirectly instructive to us in our

thinking about form in our classrooms (which I'll discuss further in the final pedagogy chapter). Finally, in the third borrowing I suggest that we consider craft-based discussions about "form" and "arrangement." While the creative fields have not produced a great deal of writing on pedagogy *specifically*, it seems clear that those in such fields have certainly thought through how the concepts of "form" or "arrangement" play a central role in the composing process more broadly.

**Subtle but Important Distinctions:
Borrowing Three Aspects of Form from Creative Writing**

Quite obviously, there are a wide variety of operative notions of "form" within creative writing. We can see distinctions between notions of "form" that have emerged in work on poetry and prose, between various literary movements, and how form is described within craft talks from various textual genres. Accordingly, in looking for more useful understandings of form that address the central concerns in rhetoric and composition that I've described above, I've chosen to focus mainly on work that has been written on or about literary narrative.

Admittedly, I've selected narrative here because it is the area with which I am most familiar. However, the approach to "form" within literary narrative is especially productive for two reasons: 1) There is quite a large body of work on "narrative" in rhetoric and composition that attempted to make an argument for a greater attention to textual form (Bridwell-Bowles 1992; Daniel 1999; Green 2003; Eldred 2005). Hence, by looking at "form" in literary narrative here, we might later consider the distinctions in the operative notions of "narrative form" between the two fields. 2) Unlike work on poetry,

work in narrative is forced to move beyond the most local or micro-features of language, thus providing a greater opportunity to get at the articulations between what I'll call the "multiple strata"²⁰ of form that those within the field of composition often fail to recognize. Further, these multiple strata of form in narrative seem to provide a path to connecting local textual discussions to broader social, civic, cultural, and communal forms. That is, the many formal conventions that narrative makes visible seem to more easily link to inventing within the social.

In the following sections, I'll detail the ways that Russian Formalism(s), examples of literary narrative, and narrative craft talks define and enact form in ways that help to address the primary problems with form in rhetoric and composition: the form and content split and the related lack of ability to understand how our work with the forms of texts are related to crafting social and civic access.

Borrowing 1: Form and Arrangement in Russian Formalism and Its Relatives

I have spent a great deal of time already in this project recovering theoretical work that has been brushed aside. But I believe it's worthwhile to briefly turn here to the Russian formalist critics, a body of theory that pre-dated Critical movements in our field, and has influenced the thinking of many in the creative arts. Russian Formalist critics, most broadly conceived of, viewed formal elements of a texts (phonemes, lexical items, stylistic choices, syntax, organization and arrangement, and the structuring of pragmatic and semantic meaning) *functionally* yet (supposedly) in isolation from their social and

²⁰ By "multiple strata," I'm referring to aspects of form ranging from grammar, organization at all levels, stylistic structural considerations, genre conventions, and so forth.

cultural contexts. While Formalism is difficult to discuss as a homogenous literary movement, the heart of Formalism seems to involve mapping basic units of form within texts, defining their function, and then describing them in relation to the *local whole* in ways that often (but not always) resemble empirical approaches.

The most fundamental problem in rhetoric and composition, then, the split between form and content, seems to be clearly taken up by the Formalists. That is, whether we look to Jakobsen's focus on form mostly at the phonetic level (Jakobsen is most interested in sound, rhyming and meter within poetic devices) or to Vladimir Propp's focus on the multiple features of form that interact at the level of genre, in almost every case what distinguishes a Formalist approach seems to be the *desire to draw links between the devices within any given text and to note how these function internally*.

We might best understand the influence of science and empiricism on the Formalists by looking at the opening of *Morphology of a Folk Tale* where Vladimir Propp begins, "In Botany, morphology means the study of the component parts of a plant, of their relationship to each other and to the whole—in other word's, the study of a plant's structure" (13). No matter how micro (in the case of Jakobsen) or macro (in the case of Propp) discussions of form may be for the Formalists, it is always implicated in a textual relationship that stresses the correspondence and arrangement of parts to the local whole. Form (or what Propp calls "structure") is always, unit by unit, doing a particular kind of work toward the locally specific purpose of a text. This link between formal strategies and the locality of a text, I argue, demonstrates a clear linking between "form" and "content" within the Formalist approach.

Russian formalism(s) offer us possibilities for redressing one of the major theoretical problems in composition: the form and content split. And we can perhaps best explain how Russian Formalism holds this view by looking briefly at the histories of Critical movements. Russian Formalism, ironically one of the theoretical ancestors of New Criticism, pre-articulates notions of form and content (and recognizes the multiple strata of form) in ways that later dropped off with New Criticism. Because rhetoric and composition has been arguably much more directly influenced by New Criticism (through Critical pedagogy) the link between form and content latent in the work of the Russian Formalists has predictably disappeared from rhetoric and composition.

One specific example of the articulation between form and content that exists in Formalism, but was not maintained very thoroughly (if at all) in New Criticism (or in Critical pedagogy as I showed in Chapter 2) is the focus on arrangement. Below, Viktor Shklovsky indirectly links form with content by focusing on notions of arrangement. Consider Shklovsky's point regarding the writer's role in arranging images as an artful act:

...images change little; from century to century, from nation to nation, from poet to poet, they flow without changing. Images belong to no one: they are 'the Lord's.' The more you understand and age, the more convinced you become that the images a given poet used and you thought his own were taken almost unchanged from another poet. The works of poets are classified or grouped according to the new techniques that poets discover and share, and according to

their arrangement and development of the resources of language; poets are much more concerned with arranging images than with creating them. (7)

In the above passage, what is key here is that the poet's role is not necessarily to "create" images as much as it is to "arrange" these images. This highlighting of arrangement-as-creation, I suggest, indirectly works to highlight the importance of form and directly links it to content. It isn't the "new" images themselves that are artful (in fact new images, unlike for New Critics, aren't really *new* for Shklovsky). Rather, it is the arrangement, the technique used to shape the poetic that is important to Shklovsky. We might say that *arrangement becomes the act of creation*; it becomes the art. Through this view, arrangement becomes inherently linked with invention. As we arrange form, we are creating content that, while perhaps not containing "new" basic images, produces something artistically renewed. In other words, while the poets are all drawing from the same "God-given" images, as they arrange these images, they *become* art. This passage provides us one of many ways to link form and content within this body of work. And I suggest that we might consider recuperating such a view: a view that offers us a chance to see the arrangement of form *as* the invention of content.

The work of Formalism has not centrally entered the field of rhetoric and composition in decades (if ever); yet, we have certainly taken up scholars that have been influenced by the Formalists, scholars like Kenneth Burke, for example. Additionally, Mikhail Bakhtin, a scholar heavily influenced by the Formalists, has often been cited by a group of scholars in our field (the Farmer and Arrington article on imitation, for example,

cites Bakhtin heavily). In his writing below, Bakhtin immediately dismisses the splitting of form and content:

... the study of verbal art must overcome the divorce between an abstract ‘formal’ approach and the equally abstract ‘ideological’ approach. Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and each and every one of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning.

(Bakhtin 259)

Clearly here, Bakhtin begins with the premise that to pull form away from content (or vice versa) would be to fall back on what Bakhtin considers “abstract” approaches.

Bakhtin’s theory establishes an easy link between form and content, but his ideas are perhaps most useful in demonstrating the *complexity* of form that is lacking in our field today. While we can see how the textual is complexly linked to the social in the quote from page 259, the following passage better represents a complex and stratified approach to form itself. Bakhtin writes, “The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice. In it the investigator is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls” (261). While Bakhtin acknowledges the “multiform” and “variform” existences of style and speech or voice, he describes these as “heterogeneous stylistic unities,” reminding us that although novels (and, I think, most forms) are heteroglossic, this heteroglossia *is always in service of the “unified” whole of a text*. That is, varied approaches to form are always bound to the carefully crafted content of a text.

Bakhtin's recognition of "multiform" and "variform" elements within a text work toward a notion of a heterogeneous but carefully-crafted and unified whole. I argue here that we can see a clear recognition of the existence of multiple formal strata operating in Bakhtin's theory.

Additionally, though, this idea of "heteroglossia," of diverse multiple formal strata co-existing within a text, allows us to trouble one of the major damaging views of form that exists within Critical pedagogy. While a "form" within Critical pedagogy is, in practice, often deemed either critically "new" or conventional (and therefore "old"), Bakhtin's understanding of heteroglossia allows us to acknowledge that employing conventional forms doesn't already reify dominant systems of power. That is, because textual forms like the novel are stratified in complex ways, it is almost impossible to claim that every aspect of a text is correlated to systems of power in a single fixed way.

While we can use Bakhtin's ideas to connect aspects of textual form to broader social, cultural, and political contexts, I want to turn back here to demonstrate that such a link is also potentially possible within Formalism itself (despite the refusal of Formalists to look beyond the internal function of basic units of (often) poetic language).

Shklovsky's notion of "roughened language" and "defamiliarization," in "Art as Technique" and *Theory of Prose*, I suggest, provide us with the material to do such work. Namely, we can see a link between textual forms and the social in Shklovsky's discussion of what motivates these techniques. Shklovsky states the following regarding "roughened" form:

In studying poetic speech in its phonetic and lexical structure as well as its characteristic distribution of words and in the characteristic thought structures compounded from words, we find everywhere the artistic trademark—that is, we find material obviously created to remove the automatism of perception; the author’s purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatized perception. A work is created “artistically” so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception. As a result of this lingering, the object is perceived not in its extension in space, but, so to speak, in its continuity. Thus “poetic language” gives satisfaction. According to Aristotle, poetic language must appear strange and wonderful; and, in fact, it is often actually foreign: the Sumerian used by the Assyrians, the Latin of Europe during the Middle Ages, the Arabisms of the Persians, the Old Bulgarian of Russian literature, or the elevated, almost literary language of folk songs. The common archaism of poetic language, the intricacy of the sweet new style [*dolce stil nuovo*], the obscure style of Arnaut Daniel with the “roughened” [*harte*] forms which make pronunciation difficult—these are used in much the same way. (Shklovsky 21-22)

Shklovsky discusses here the “artistic trademark” of “removing the automatism of perception” (21). He discusses the borrowing of “Old” languages in the “almost literary language of folk songs” as a key example of “roughened” form. The “difficulty” experienced by the perceiver of these ‘roughened’ forms for Shklovsky is called “defamiliarization.” On this he writes:

Habitualization devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. 'If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been.' And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in and of itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important. (12-13)

Here, by moving toward explaining why defamiliarization and the "roughening" of language are artistic, necessary techniques, Shklovsky takes a step (although admittedly, not a very firm one) toward articulating textual form with the social. Shklovsky starts out by explaining the work of "defamiliarization" as disrupting "habitualization." And this suggests some kind of disruption in our day-to-day lives. In other words this disruption, while changing something about our perception, is also changing something about *us*. In this way then, the technique of a text – its ability to employ defamiliarization in order to shift our perceptions – does so in a way that could potentially impact (and is impacted by) the status quo of social, cultural and political forms. Yet, Shklovsky ends this passage by turning back on the logic of experiencing art for art's sake, thus cutting off the potential to flesh out a link between the textual and social.

Formalism offers rhetoric and composition a clear view that form is linked to content. If we can accept that argument, then we can begin to work toward recognizing

the more nuanced, multi-layered sense of form proposed by the Formalists. Forms do not inherently stifle invention or creativity, and if we see forms as always incorporating multiple-strata, then suddenly the possibilities for inventing by using form become clearer. Furthermore, a more nuanced view of form available through a Formalist perspective allows us to talk about how the forms of the texts are inherently social. When we employ form, and especially through our negotiation of form, we are already always inventing.

**Borrowing 2:
Deriving Knowledge about “Form” and “Arrangement” from Literary Examples**

The next two borrowings turn to more practical kinds of texts that we might use in our classrooms. I’ll talk about both of these further in my *Pedagogy of Persistence* in the next chapter. I suggest here that if we want a more nuanced sense of form in our rhetoric and composition classroom, we need to incorporate examples of literary texts. If we truly intend on nuancing our sense of form, we cannot leave texts that employ form in complex ways on the margins of our discipline or in our classroom. I argue that because such texts stem from craft-based traditions, they best invite us to see how form is always working in relation to content.

So what exactly does the examination of an array of literary texts tell us about “form” and its relationship to “content”? While this is much too broad an undertaking for this space, I’m particularly interested in how we might use specific examples of literary narratives to develop thoughts on form within the composition classroom.

Often, when teaching composition I argue that we should use examples of texts that make breaks from traditional kinds of structures in order to make the structures of texts most visible (e.g. Barthelme 1967, 1975; Calvino 1974; Gogol 1985; Kincaid 1978; Laken 2011; Marcus 1998, 2002; Powell 2009; Shapton 2009; Sheck 2009; Wallace 1999). Each of these texts in the citation above make use of an existing formal convention and shift what we might expect within that form. For example, I talk at length about David Foster Wallace's use of the interview in *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, or Leanne Shapton's use of the auction catalog form for her project. By reading texts that use form in overly explicit and clearly visible ways, students begin to understand that composers make conscious choices about form. And it is at that point in the semester that I ask them to read texts we might consider more "traditional" or "conventional" in nature (e.g. Barrett 1996; Chekhov 2001, 2002; Dybeck 1984). After having read texts that break from convention more visibly, students are better prepared to talk about texts that employ more codified convention. In other words, students can see the structures and forms of texts that might have previously seemed opaque to them. In both cases, though – and as I'll discuss more later – using texts stemming from craft-based traditions is foundational to asking students to produce texts that are in and of themselves conscious about form and convention. I believe that in order to draw our attention to form in the richest of ways possible, we not only have to use texts in which conventions are broken, but to use texts that have structures that seem smoother to us and to understand, in both cases, how form is operating.

Borrowing 3: Form and Arrangement in Craft Talks

Given the ideas of Shklovsky, Jakobsen, Propp, Bakhtin and others, we are certainly able to see – theoretically at least – a move toward the mending of form and content, toward recognizing the multiple strata of form, and viewing form as complexly situated in relationship to our social and civic spheres. Yet, we need much more than these past ideas to change the momentum of our field that is quite set in its ways. This is why I see the genre of the “craft talks” as quite appealing. Craft talks link form and content by isolating aspects of form in order to place them in a complex web of other formal elements. In other words, craft talks put an element of craft in dialogue with the other strata of form, if you will (and they very occasionally then place form in relation to broader social, cultural and political structures).

While I certainly cannot do justice to the genre of the “craft talk” here with the few texts I will review, I want to spend time focusing on the isolation of particular aspects of form within craft talks to delineate how this isolation functions in ways that yield richer senses of form than available in our own field. In rhetoric and composition, form is isolated often at the level of genre or mode (e.g. narrative, digital media). Craft talks, on the other hand, such as Joan Silber’s *The Art of Time in Fiction*, isolate and frame the crafting of texts through a particular feature or features. While it is the case that these talks often separate out these features from others at moments, it is precisely the zooming in and out of focus on that particular feature (whether it be the management of time or narrative momentum) that cements its relationship to content, to other formal features present in the whole of the piece. Further, while craft talks discuss this feature

only in terms of its function and correspondence with other features (and sometimes the content of a particular text), craft talks such as Charles Baxter's *Burning Down the House* describe historical trends in fiction and often hypothesize what these trends indicate about our society. While certainly it would be of limited value to have students in rhetoric and composition (who are likely not writing narratives) read narrative craft talks, we might imagine versions of craft talks written on corresponding features in the genre of academic writing. For example, instead of reading about time in fiction, students might read about how time can be displayed in academic discourse. Or, to offer yet another example, instead of reading about the need for more antagonists in contemporary fiction (an argument Baxter makes in *Burning Down the House*), a craft talk in rhetoric and composition might discuss how we position views within writing that we'd like to problematize. These examples, it seems, fit well with some of the major past projects in rhetoric that existed in our field before the dominant influence of Critical pedagogy.

Beyond the interesting way in which craft talks usefully isolate and re-articulate the multiple stratas of form, they are also interesting in how they position the role of the writer in relation to the social (as many do this much more explicitly than it seems other conversations/texts existing in creative writing are willing to). In his seminal chapter, "Common Errors" in *The Art of Fiction*, for example, John Gardner discusses errors often made by amateur fiction writers. Among these are three errors that he deems, not faults of technique, but "faults of the soul" (115). These errors, he states, are sentimentality, frigidity and mannerism. I'm interested less in the faults themselves and more in how these faults are linked to the "soul" for Gardner. Earlier in the chapter, he makes a similar

claim about diction. He states, “Diction problems are usually symptomatic of defects in the character or education of the writer” (101). While the pronouncements that Gardner makes regarding sentimentality, frigidity, mannerism, and diction may seem overly prescriptive (or even highly elitist from the perspective of many compositionists) these claims cement a relationship between the forms employed by individual writers and their positionality/(in)ability to craft particular kinds of meanings with their writing. Good writing is the product of more than just the functions of language; good writing has to stem from an ethical and just stance on the world that is enacted and put on the page using forms that lend themselves to that message. While this is not a view made explicit by many creative writers, I believe that it is one that demonstrates the way in which the most micro-choices in writing are seen, experienced even, to reflect our social positions and stances. While creative writers often shy away from discussions of broader social, cultural and political implications by retreating into the idea of hyper-locality of texts, or the aesthetic arguments about “art for art’s sake,” craft talks can be a useful location for teasing out connections between texts and their broader contexts.

Looking Ahead: Possibilities for Pulling the Three “Borrowings” Forward

I have suggested throughout this last section that we might consider the work of Russian Formalists, examples of literary texts, and craft talks to help us nuance our own sense of form. In the next chapter, I propose a pedagogy that employs these borrowings. However, the potential effect of these borrowings on the field more broadly is contingent upon setting aside some deep reservations we have about treating “form” and

“convention” in very particular ways. But I suggest that although our narrative about the potential dangers of holding to form and convention in our writing classrooms has been powerful, it might be time to test out some of these theories again in the contexts of our own pedagogies. If we are right about the dangers of form and convention, then we can retreat to our previous approaches. But if we take a chance and try some of this out, we only stand to gain, I argue, a more balanced approach to the composing process. We stand to gain a chance to consider how composing is inherently about responding to what has come before us, and to knowingly move ahead and forge a new future.

CHAPTER 4

A Pedagogy of Persistence: Fostering Practical Access in Our Contemporary Classrooms

Successful writers are not the ones who write the best sentences. They are the ones who keep writing. They are the ones who discover what is most important and strangest and most pleasurable in themselves, and keep believing in the value of their work, despite the difficulties. — Bonnie Friedman

Inevitably in our first-year writing classrooms we encounter students who resist thinking of themselves as “writers.” In my courses anyway, at the beginning of the semester when we discuss what it means to be a “writer,” many of my students exclude themselves. “Writers read the dictionary for fun,” they say, or, “Writers like words and have always been *really good* at writing.” Some students imagine a “writerly type” in possession of thick glasses, a battered Moleskin, a melancholy disposition, inherent talent, and a long list of publications. Like many of my students, I grew up in a community where no adults I knew considered themselves writers. I remember well what it was like to believe that writing was not something that belonged to people like me. And I can still recall what writing felt like before — well into my late 20s — I could finally say aloud, “I am a writer.” I realized then that writing was not limited to the work of professionals, but rather, it was a necessary tool to communicate effectively with others, a way to forge enriching relationships, and a means of participating in communities.

Those in our discipline have insisted for decades on a fact it took me a long time to learn: that writing — becoming a “writer” — offers us a tool for engaging in our social and civic spheres. Since the late 1970s, rhetoric and composition scholars have argued that acquiring composing skills is a means of accessing communities and tapping into new ways of being in the world. I recognize that, to many outside of our discipline, this

view of writing instruction might seem rather exaggerated or romantic. Even though I am now a convert to this belief, in my time teaching writing (and especially during my time assisting in training other writing teachers), there were many moments I doubted the potential of writing instruction to shape or transform our social lives, to do this in ways that mattered... *really*. But after wading through all of my doubts (and experiencing many disappointments), I still believe in writing instruction's ability to do this social and civic work. And I see this firm, unshakable belief — the belief that writing classes are capable of changing our social lives — as most strongly binding together those in our field today. Despite differences in our approaches to grammar, or whether we talk more about ethos or identity, many of us view our job as crafting classroom spaces where students can see real and palpable in-roads to voicing things that matter to them as a means of making changes within the communities they inhabit. But despite our wide-spread commitment to fostering engagement in our social and civic spheres in our writing classrooms, I have argued throughout this project that the potential to do meaningful work in these arenas has too often remained under-developed and unexplored. Despite my doubts in the earlier days of my career about the *possibility* of doing social and civic work in our university writing programs, I have come to realize that the problem isn't that these social goals are impossible (although, admittedly, they certainly pose challenges). Rather, the problem likely resides in our execution of these possibilities. We have simply stopped short in our pursuit of them.

As I have shown in the earlier pages of this project, we have long been caught up on the role of invention and the critically “new” in our field as *the* means of achieving

these social and civic goals. I have posited that this rather narrow focus has cost us the valuable chance to consider the work (and great social possibility) of writing *beyond* invention. It has cost us, for example, the chance to consider how we shape and arrange our texts to make them most clear and compelling for our audiences. Under these pedagogical models privileging invention, we have also foregone the chance to think about how to write in more artful ways that render emotion, or how we might craft our arguments more gracefully or elegantly. While the roles of style, beauty, and artfulness in writing have been swept aside as ornamental, out-dated concerns in our field, these aspects of composing offer us real ways to connect with others, to move them. Our privileging of invention has often cost us, too, opportunities to address how the texts we produce might circulate more broadly, or to consider the ways texts are delivered to others (and how that delivery impacts how they are read). All of these acts of composing that stretch beyond invention have, in the best cases in our recent history, taken a back seat. But in the worst cases, they have been effaced from our classrooms and curriculums altogether. In the pages that follow, I will suggest in my proposed pedagogy that these are vitally important and necessary considerations if we truly wish to link the act of writing to our social and civic life. It is the experience engaging with the whole of the composing process (producing a text and then heavily revising it again and again until, eventually, it finds the readers we intended) that forges the connection between writing and the social. By encouraging our students to craft texts that are always *inventions in response to others* (and therefore existing conventions), we can best understand how the writing we do sprawls out into our communities.

The pedagogy I propose is meant as a starting point in a dialogue about what it might look like to take back aspects of the composing process that we've swept to the margins. It is a pedagogy that, in its exactness, I'm still developing. But at its heart the pedagogy is meant to extend our attention, to expand *writing* across the *whole of the writing process* in ways that articulate invention with convention and the subsequent rhetorical canons. I don't, admittedly, have a precise formula for how to make that happen in every context. But over the last several years in my own classrooms, I am confident that I am moving closer to work that echoes these values. Below, I offer a description of what such a pedagogy might look like. My Pedagogy of Persistence includes nine guiding principles — starting places — and assignments that have yielded moments in my classrooms where my students and I suddenly “got it.” The goal of this pedagogy is to encourage such moments, moments when we can feel the walls of our classrooms fall away, and see the desks sinking into the floor. Although it is hard work to connect the writing that happens in classrooms to our social and civic worlds, I want my students to experience instances where they forget that we are 20-something people in a required writing course. Instead, I want for us to occasionally simply *be people* learning to make things together, and learning to make those things better and stronger and more beautifully. I am certain that if we can foster just enough of those moments, even our most reluctant students will get a chance to understand what it means to be a “writer,” and to consider what it might take to persist in that work.

PART 1: Some Brief Overview: The Theoretical Cornerstones of A Pedagogy of Persistence

The primary goal of this final chapter is to pull forward the theories I discussed in the previous three, and to demonstrate what those look like in the classroom. But before proposing the specific guiding principles of my Pedagogy of Persistence, in this part I give some brief overview of the central theoretical concerns in the project and link those to my pedagogy. Namely, in the next section I review what it means to construct the mediational portal *within our classrooms*, and I make clear how I understand that portal as a gateway to Practical access in such spaces. Finally, in the last section before Part 2, I review the role of arrangement and new media in my Pedagogy of Persistence, and I emphasize the role of an arrangement-based approach to new media in developing the mediational portal in our classrooms today.

Constructing the Mediational Portal in Our Classrooms: Linking Invention and Convention Toward Practical Access

Near the end of Chapter 1, I posited a portal approach to access, an approach focused on what *activities* we have historically believed foster access in our classrooms. Unlike the earlier portals of access — where access stemmed from either inventing or responding to convention — the mediational portal of access is established by mediating between the two activities. To develop the mediational portal within our contemporary composition classrooms, students read, write, and revise in ways that highlight the constant movement *between* acts of invention and responding to convention. In other words, students are asked to grapple with the conventions of arrangement, style, and

other formal considerations, and to test these out as a means of inventing their own projects. Through the process of revision, students experience the constant vacillation between inventing and responding to convention. And this moving between convention and invention over the course of producing multiple drafts, I argue, increases the effectiveness and success of our students' writing; it allows them to produce writing that better responds to others in *real* communities and to understand and engage with audience more complexly and dynamically.

I have suggested that the mediational portal — a portal that highlights *both* acts of inventing and responding to convention — is important for fostering Practical access, or for extending access beyond our classrooms and campuses and out into our communities. In Chapter 1 I argued that our current approaches to writing focus heavily on invention, or ask students to write in ways that are “new to them.” In other words, invention-based approaches have simply been insufficient in producing writing that extends into our communities. On the other hand, our traditional, conventional approaches to access have been critiqued for adhering too rigidly to already-existing forms, and therefore foreclosing invention altogether. A mediational portal acknowledges the existing conventions of communities, but allows one to consider what it might take to best communicate within those communities (by responding to already-established conventions in a wide range of ways, including utilizing new, experimental forms or writing strategies). I have argued that to be a successful composer within a given community, both inventing *and* responding to convention are absolutely necessary; it is precisely the moving back and forth between those acts (especially throughout the

revision process) that allows one to be effective, and to create texts that address the real social and civic concerns of others.

As a means of developing the mediational portal in service of fostering Practical access in my Pedagogy of Persistence, I craft assignment sequences that help connect students to the communities that matter most to them. In the classroom I want students to consider what it means to accomplish goals or incite change within the communities they inhabit. While focusing on social issues in writing classes has been a common, well-justified approach in rhetoric and composition (i.e. we might include all iterations of Critical pedagogy, Social Constructionist and Materialist approaches here), often these broad social-issues approaches — because they have often privileged invention — offer students few ways of considering what the social has to do with the nuances of their writing. That is, while our writing classrooms have often asked students to take up broad political discussions like inequality in education, or class warfare, for example, students have little idea how their wielding of commas or crafting of paragraphs is linked to how and what they communicate on such broad social topics²¹. However, my research has encouraged me to develop specific pedagogical approaches that link the micro-level features of texts to their potential social effects (to link our use of textual conventions to our options for inventing within the social spheres we inhabit). For example, a typical week in my classroom might involve reflecting on the conventions of quotation and why those conventions vary across multiple genres of writing (how they function differently

²¹ To put this differently, we might say socially motivated pedagogies, such as Critical pedagogy, ask students to take on the social through the content of their writing only. These pedagogies are not concerned with making specific links between the forms of texts and the broad social goals they espouse. Even when there is attention to the forms of texts, these forms are looked upon quite simplistically: existing conventions and forms are oppressive; “new,” creative or inventive approaches are favored.

and, most importantly, how we can use them to achieve various outcomes). Or we might discuss the angle or color choices used in a fashion photograph as a means of situating the subject politically (and then discuss what kinds of choices we can make with language to accomplish similar work). These tasks of considering how conventions function within texts doesn't dictate or close down options for how students compose, but rather presents them with a range of choices that they can respond to by adopting, altering, or thwarting such conventions altogether. But it is important to note that even when students choose the most unconventional or experimental forms for their compositions, my classes highlight the relationship between what we create and what has come before. I foreground how what we make is most often a response to others, and by highlighting *composing as an act of response*, we are able to better evaluate what it means to compose effectively for one's audience, and to write with/in a community.

Also through my assignment sequences, students are asked to heavily revise their arrangements, to craft style in new ways, and even to test what their text might look like in different media or forms. Such emphasis on close textual attention and revision helps students see for themselves how changes in their texts also change how others read and respond. As students revise their texts again and again, I ask them to reflect upon how the composing decisions they make affect how their texts are read by others (i.e. their colleagues in the class *and* other people within their communities) and how they might revise accordingly. I offer students in my writing classes ample opportunities to give one another sustained and serious feedback. And by the end of my courses, students learn to consider revision far beyond simply "improving" a text. I know I have succeeded in my

work as a writing teacher when my students come to view composing as difficult, pleasurable, time-consuming, and necessary for communicating with others in the world we share.

It is true that asking students to consider the relationships between the texts they produce and the worlds they want to live in is difficult work, but it is far from impossible. I firmly believe that my Pedagogy of Persistence offers students not only a chance to write better and more powerful sentences (although it *does*, of course, aim to do this), but to understand the value of choosing to write — to be “writers” — and to persist in that work. After all, as Friedman’s quote reminds us, writing better sentences is only useful if we know how to discover the strange and important, if we know how to write our way into (and out of) communities, if we can revel in the pleasure of believing that what we say might be capable of arranging and re-arranging the communities in which we live.

Turning Our Attention to Arrangement in the Age of New Media

I have focused on new media in various places throughout this project, but all of these discussions have been rather fleeting. Here, I want to take a moment to give a little more context regarding the role of an arrangement-based new media approach in developing my Pedagogy of Persistence. While neither new media nor arrangement are the *only* means by which we might create the mediational portal to Practical access, I have found them of particular value in our contemporary classrooms.

As I stated in Chapter 2, new media texts play an especially invaluable role in my courses. These texts make writing’s social conventions more visible and relevant for

students (because of how these texts are situated in our culture). The conventions of new media texts are more visible than traditional texts because they are still in the process of being codified in our culture; therefore, the status of convention in new media offers us an easy way of linking convention with invention²². In working with new media texts, my aim is to create an atmosphere where students try out composing widely in order to recognize the many options for acting in the world through negotiating convention and invention in their writing. Once students are able to recognize the dynamic relationship between convention and invention in new media texts, I attempt to bridge our discussions of composing in new media with more traditional forms (forms of traditional academic writing; forms that have long-been codified, and therefore have less visible conventions).

Using new media in the composition classrooms has become a quite popular approach, but I want to underscore a fundamental difference between kinds of approaches to new media so that I can situate my pedagogy along that continuum. While there are constantly new articles published on using the latest software or employing a new mode in our composition classrooms, many of these approaches seem to share a common exigency: producing and promoting the “new.” Our sense of exactly what we hope to gain from these “new” tools and techniques seems surprisingly un-nuanced. As Jodi Shipka reminds us in her 2005 article, “Increasing the range of semiotic resources with which students are allowed to work will not, *in and of itself*, lead to a greater awareness of the ways systems of delivery, reception, and circulation shape (and take shape from) the means and modes of production” (278; emphasis in the original). Shipka is mainly

²² Conventions in new media, because they are not as “authorized,” do not risk foreclosing invention; new media conventions are simply viewed by students as strategies for expressing one’s purpose that are always up for debate.

concerned here with our field's failure to recognize the whole of the composition process (specifically, Shipka seems concerned about affording more attention to delivery). What we might glean from Shipka's critique is that exponentially multiplying the number of modes we use in our classroom does little to push us forward in guiding our students toward producing their very best work. Shipka implies that focusing on the modes as a catch-all means to solve the complex problems facing composers is far too simple a solution. While I agree whole-heartedly with Shipka's critique, I have suggested that the tendency to focus on the modes of composing — especially for their “newness” — is part of a much larger problem that, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1, stems from theoretical movements long-preceding the work in new media and multimodal composition in our field. In other words, the drive toward “newness,” I argue, has little to do with new media itself. In order to seriously tackle the problem that Shipka describes in new media studies, we will have to take a more conscious approach toward the sweeping drive toward “newness” as we move forward in our field more generally.

While the most common approach to new media is one that focuses heavily on the “new,” like Shipka I want to utilize new media instead to extend attention across the whole of the writing process. But in order to do that we need to very consciously address invention and its relationship to convention and the other rhetorical canons. In earlier chapters, I argued that while new media work often affords many exciting opportunities in our writing classrooms, its implementation and rationale too often hinges upon the theoretical precepts of Critical theories dating back to the late 1970s or early 1980s. And because we have too often focused on producing the Critically “new,” we have thereby

unnecessarily limited the possibilities for composing in our contemporary new media classrooms. This is where arrangement enters the scene; my arrangement-based approach to composing can be useful in helping our field extend its attention. Despite the fact that we often unconsciously rely on Critical theories as a way to ground our most contemporary work with new media texts, we have not stifled the development of a rich melange of studies, data, and ideas in our writing classrooms that organically emerge beyond invention. That is, I argue that despite our outdated and inefficient reliance on old theoretical models in *framing the value of new media*, there have nevertheless been some fascinating emergences within our new media literature and classrooms. The good news is this, then: we are already attending to arrangement, style, memory, and delivery in our writing classrooms (albeit often very indirectly and inefficiently). These aspects of writing are inherently part of the composing process, after all, and it would be difficult to shut them out altogether. It is simply that our tools for doing this work need sharpening. And an arrangement-based approach to composing, I suggest, is the first step in the right direction toward doing this work.

In Chapter 2, I argued that we can use a resuscitated concept of arrangement to draw our attention beyond invention, and to highlight the vacillation between convention and invention. In my *Pedagogy of Persistence* I demonstrate what it looks like to use an arrangement-based approach to new media texts to do such work. In the nine pedagogical principles that follow, I will offer a three-pronged approach to teaching composition across the composing process. The principles address reading, writing, and revision in

order to encourage work that extends beyond our writing classrooms and into our communities.

PART 2: Proposing A Pedagogy of Persistence: 9 Guiding Principles for Access through Arrangement in the Age of New Media

One of the problems we encounter in encouraging social and civic engagement in our classrooms is made immediately apparent as our students shuffle into their desks for the very first time each semester. Some students express confusion or resentment about the number of required writing classes, courses that — to them — bear little resemblance to the work they’ll be doing in their respective fields or in their lives beyond the university. When this occurs, it becomes clear that our discipline’s preferred view of “writer” (i.e. one who writes to engage in the social and civic spheres) is at odds with the definition of “writer” offered by many of our students (i.e. the writer-as-professional or even the Romantic notion of the writer-as-genius). If what we want is to encourage a more socially and civically motivated role for “writers,” we must first carefully cultivate such a definition in our classrooms. The Pedagogy of Persistence that I will propose throughout this next section is fundamentally a means of attempting to cultivate classroom environments where writing — and becoming a “writer” — are more closely tied to social and civic participation.

Highlighting the value of persistence is useful in fostering a socially and civically-minded approach to writing. By linking the tedious processes of writing and revision to our attempts at responding and making an impact within a community, students recognize

the potential social power of writing, and they begin to see why it is important to persist in our efforts as writers. To put this differently, if writers are, at core, people who are trying to communicate in order to *do things*, then the necessity of persistence becomes more visible to students. And by shifting the definition of “writer” in this way, students no longer believe that one must achieve some vague level of professional success in order to be crowned a writer. Instead, a writer is someone who enacts a writerly identity in relation to a specific project that is often already important to them. And as the writers of such projects, students in my classes quickly realize that their work does not end as they walk away from campus after our 16-week semester concludes.

It is true that most writing instructors would acknowledge that persistence is important; however, it is my aim here to extend the nature of *how* we teach our students to persist. Many of us have accepted that our assignment sequences should guide students through the arduous process of working and reworking a single draft again and again. But persistence is also — and perhaps more importantly — about teaching students methodologies for approaching (and staying with) long-term projects outside of our classrooms. Such long-term projects span across time, communicative modes, slight variances in audience, and often require numerous attempts at communicating. At the heart of it all, what I want my students to learn is a set of skills — a methodology — for persisting in finding better, more salient, beautiful, and efficient ways of communicating something worthwhile in a community to which they belong. While it is true that our writing classrooms have been somewhat successful in helping students persist in revising drafts of their academic essays, I have argued throughout this project that the ways we

teach writing as a means of *doing* social and civic work have been less clear (and likely less successful). That is, we seem less pedagogically focused on training our students to take on the role of “writer” in the communities they inhabit. Hence, in this section, I propose my nine Principles for teaching reading, writing, and revising. It is my hope that this proposed pedagogy opens up a dialogue about what it might mean for students in writing classrooms to be continually engaged in reading, writing, and revising not just in and for the academy, but rather, *beyond it*. By collectively re-imagining definitions of “writer” that expand beyond our universities, we can promote writing as an activity that does not belong to a select group of widely-published essayists or novelists, but is instead a great and (often) pleasurable responsibility we must share.

A Pedagogy of Persistence: Principles for Reading Practices

Read, read, read. Read everything — trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. Read! —William Faulkner, Statement at the University of Mississippi, 1947

The view of reading as a way of considering craft, as Faulkner suggests here, is one that has become quite foreign in our contemporary composition classrooms. In the field of rhetoric and composition, our focus on invention has often caused us to select course texts based on their ability to get students to “think critically” or develop “new,” socially transgressive ideas. Our focus on invention has moved us away from using texts in the classroom as a means for modeling particular formal conventions. As discussed in Chapter 3 in regard to imitation, in fact, modeling, imitation, or any practices of the sort are often frowned upon in our field.

Even in the moments we have afforded attention to practices such as modeling or imitation, we seem to curiously dismiss the role of formal convention in such practices. In “Modeling a Writer’s Identity: Reading and Imitation in the Writing Classroom,” Robert Brooke states that when we model, we are essentially attempting to emulate personalities of other writers (and thus attempting to reinvent ourselves). Brooke states:

Writers learn to write by imitating other writers, by trying to act like writers they respect. The forms, the processes, the texts are in themselves less important as models to be imitated than the personalities, or identities, of the writers who produce them. Imitation, so the saying goes, is a form of flattery: we imitate because we respect the people we imitate, and because we want to be like them.

(23)

By removing the importance of “the forms, the processes, [and] the texts,” and instead placing emphasis on identity here, Brooke misses important opportunities to discuss textual conventions, and instead shifts the conversation to the importance of inventing oneself (and identity). More importantly, though, given this invention-centric view of modeling we miss the opportunity to understand the intricate linking between formal convention *and* inventing one’s identity; one’s identity isn’t, after all, extractable from the forms it takes. By treating the conventional forms of texts and the identities we invent through our writing as separate, we are missing a chance to develop the mediational portal of access (to see convention as always intricately linked to invention). Our views about modeling, then, even when generous like Brooke’s above, don’t offer us a chance to read as “apprentices” — through the lens of craft — as Faulkner proposes above.

In this section, I entertain how the possibilities for reading might expand if we set aside our historical hang-ups about modeling, imitation, and the role of convention more generally. I advocate that we should consider (as creative writers, artists, and musicians continue to do) that using texts as models while reading (and even as a means of imitative compositional practice) doesn't necessarily foreclose invention, and can, in fact, be fruitful for invention. When we read texts as models, attending to the text's convention not only sets us up to compose more consciously, but it offers us a more specific chance to see how other writers have responded to agreed-upon convention, and to thus consider how, as writers, we might enter into dialogues rooted within particular communities. Below I discuss the first three principles intended to develop the role of reading in this respect. My approach to reading ascribes modeling a central role, but does not envision such models to be mechanically copied or automatically authorized. Instead, I mean for these texts (and the conversations we have about them) to set us up for thinking about "how [writers] do it," as Faulkner states. According to Faulkner, in the space of my classroom, my students and I are like "carpenters" working as apprentices studying the Masters. But our role as apprentice doesn't detract from the fact that we are *writers*, word-smiths reading constantly in order to figure out how to best "do it;" we are learning to make structures of our own, structures that are sturdier and more beautiful than what we were able to make before.

Principle 1:
Reading New Media

New media texts provide clear opportunities to make the formal strategies employed by writers most visible to our students. While a common use of the term “new media” references strictly digital or multimodal texts, here I use the term following Wysocki’s definition. Wysocki posits that new media is not limited to digital texts, but rather incorporates texts that have been made by composers, “who are aware of the range of materialities... and who then highlight the materiality” of their own composition (15). Wysocki’s definition makes it possible for us to include texts composed in print and more traditional forms as “new media” texts. She goes on to write that “such composers design texts that help readers/consumers/viewers stay alert to how any text — like its composers and readers — doesn’t function independently of how it is made and in what contexts. Such composers design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they embody (15). As one might well-imagine, the texts that Wysocki considers “new media” are of particular value in developing the mediational portal of access. These texts draw readers’ attention to “how [a text] is made” (by highlighting how textual forms and strategies are linked to purpose). The materiality of a text, according to Wysocki’s definition, is then linked to the “contexts” in which they are produced. In reading media texts, then, we are easily positioned as apprentice carpenters; we are invited to consider how we might use the particular forms, strategies, and structures of texts to build something of our own, something that will best serve our purposes in the social environments we inhabit.

Wysocki's definition of new media radically expands the possibilities of what kinds of texts might be considered "new media." But for me, one of the most important things in this definition is that it draws our attention past invention and toward the importance of "form" in the classroom. This definition actively resists the privileging of "new" modes (the problem that Shipka wrote about). Instead, "new media" centers on the nuanced relationships between textual materialities (including the conventions of those materialities) and a writer's purpose. In other words, by this definition, a text that is composed in a digital environment (but composed in ways that ignore form and convention) is *not* a new media text. On the other hand, a text produced during the Middle Ages that makes clear, conscious use of materials to draw our attention to form, could be considered "new media." Likewise, many forms produced in print today (so long as these draw our attention toward materiality and form) could be considered "new media" texts. It is precisely this expansion of what might be considered "new media" that I find most useful in deciding what my students will read.

I make sure that the majority of texts I select in my classrooms align with how I read Wysocki's definition of "new media." These texts draw students' attention to form and to the deliberate choices made by composers. Therefore, the "new media" texts in my classrooms serve as models. But they are not necessarily models of a set or specific form that I want my students to learn²³; they are instead *models of a methodology of composing* to which I want my students to carefully attend.

²³ Although I should note that if a particular form is useful, I have no objection to a text being used in this way.

While Wysocki's definition of "new media" that I employ throughout my Pedagogy of Persistence does not give primacy to digital texts, because digitality is an important aspect of our culture, I often do incorporate at least one digital or multimodal text in my classroom each semester. In all honesty, though, I have had more difficulty selecting digital texts that hold to how I understand Wysocki's definition of "new media" than I have "new media" texts that adhere to some of the conventions of print-based forms. I have found that many digital texts seem to use form in ways that are, for lack of a better way of expressing it, formally "gimmicky." In other words, I have struggled to find as many digital or multimodal texts that don't fetishize form, employing it in ways that feel forced, arbitrary, and not inherently linked to the purpose of the work.

Nonetheless, I have found a small selection of digital, new media texts that seem to work well in highlighting the relationship between convention and invention in the composing process. For example, Maira Kalman's "Back to the Land" is a smart digital photoessay on the politics of food in our nation. Students enjoy discussing the relationship between photograph, typeface, resolution, and other formal elements of the essay that draw our attention to the text's materiality and highlight its purpose. We talk about, for example, how certain formal conventions of "essays" seem to be thwarted by Kalman's use of handwriting; or how the various sizes of the photographs affect the "weight" we assign them in Kalman's argument; we discuss how the resolution of the photos (some are quite blurry) reflect her purpose of reflecting on how our fast-paced culture has affected our relationship to food. When I have used Kalman's work in my classroom students are, as Wysocki suggests, able to easily consider *how* and *why* Kalman's text might be

constructed as it was. And they are able to read this text not merely as a form to imitate, but rather as a text that makes visible a methodology for composing, for considering the relationships between the materials, form, and strategies used by Kalman, and how those shaped and augmented her purpose.

Another example of a digital, new media text that I have successfully used in my writing classrooms is the piece, “Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek,” by John Branch. The interactive nature of this article, its pacing, and its use of color make Branch’s composing strategies easily visible to readers. Branch used such strategies to replicate the experience of the skiers trapped during the avalanche. I have had wonderful discussions with my students about how the formal strategies employed by Branch are effective in creating a sense of urgency in viewers, and ultimately, in crafting empathy. Because Branch’s text draws our attention to materiality (and the range of formal strategies it adheres to and thwarts), it is relatively easy to point out to my students a methodology for composing that vacillates between invention and convention. Both Kalman and Branch’s texts have been effective in fostering a classroom space for my students to read new media in ways that make the mediational portal of access possible. The constant negotiation between convention and invention in these texts positions students to consider how they might do this negotiation themselves while composing texts that matter to them, and while writing for the communities that they inhabit.

In discussing the act of reading above, I advocated for a craft-based approach to reading that makes use of texts as formal models. Such models can teach us about the conventions of making a *particular* kind of text (a photoessay like Kalman, or an

interactive journalistic piece like Branch). And I certainly afford room for talking about possibilities for imitating conventions of such particular forms with my students. But I should point out that because I'm using texts to model not simply particular conventions, but also a methodology of reading and writing, the genre of the text or its specific mode or form is less important than the fact that the text makes visible the relationship between convention and invention. For this reason, it is easy to justify looking across disciplines in order to select "new media" readings that set students up for this work.

I mentioned previously that I have often found it difficult to locate digital texts that would easily be considered "new media." However, I have had great success incorporating new media texts that adhere to particular print conventions (and make clear how those conventions are centrally tied to purpose). I won't have time to go into a lengthy discussion of all of these texts here, but I want to stress that there are plenty of contemporary print-based texts that we might consider "new media." These print-based texts sometimes borrow form, or break away from traditional forms in ways that students readily notice. Ben Marcus' *The Age of Wire and String* or his *Notable American Women* might both be considered "new media" texts by Wysocki's account. David Foster Wallace's *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* uses, for example, the interview form as a way of story-telling. Padgett Powell's *The Interrogative Mood: A Novel?* makes use of the question form. And there are many others: Laurie R. King's *A Monster's Notes*, David Barthelme's work, Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl," Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*; these texts also adhere to how I read Wysocki's definition of new media. I have often used Valerie Laken's story, "Separate Kingdoms," in my writing classes. The story borrows a two-

column format from a newspaper to show simultaneous action in the lives of two characters (a father and son). Despite being composed and distributed by ink on a paper page, all of these texts call into question codified conventions, and draw our attention to how we confront the text in front of us. Such texts invite us to consider why the forms and conventions are rendered as they are in order to communicate what they do.

Although many of the texts I select would fit the criteria of “new media,” I would also argue that we might make arguments utilizing texts that break less radically from traditional forms, but nonetheless do structurally interesting or unusual things that easily make visible the relationships between a text's materiality, its conventions and forms, and its purpose. I have used texts such as Andrea Barrett's “Behavior of the Hawkweeds” to do such work in my writing classes. In my pedagogy, then, I also rely on texts that we might consider more traditional in nature, and might not be considered new media at all (such as stories by Anton Chekhov) or essays in writing studies making use of traditional, codified structures. I use these more traditional texts as foils of sorts, or to get students to understand how and why the meaning of texts that employ breaks in convention are doing such work.

My point here in mentioning these print-based new media texts is simply to show that a new media approach can and must move beyond purely digital forms if we hope to underscore a view of composing that highlights the relationship between convention and invention in a wide array of texts. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, many of these texts are produced or related to the field of creative writing, and I draw heavily on texts produced out of that tradition because of the ways the creative fields have held onto more complex

senses of form, and have therefore become more willing and able to consciously experiment with the forms of text. If we hope that our students will make clever use of formal strategies (including arrangement and style), we cannot continue to primarily rely on texts that ignore these textual strategies in our classrooms. I argue that even if the genres of texts students read differ from what they produce, texts that are composed with conscious attention to craft stand to point students toward possible methodologies for crafting texts in richer and more satisfying ways.

One example of a print-based new media text with which I've worked carefully in my writing classrooms is Leanne Shapton's *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris*. Shapton's text is in the form of an auction catalog, and uses photographs of material objects to document the dissolution of a relationship between the two main characters, Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris. The text masterfully employs the conventions of auction catalog form to show the ending of the relationship. As an assignment in response to this text, I ask my students to borrow a textual form (auction catalog, political pamphlet, encyclopedia, text messages, etc.) to tell the story of something beginning or ending in their community²⁴. By focusing on borrowing a form to tell the story of an emergence or closure, students have a particular task at hand, and they have a clear model in Shapton's text that shows how they might do this. In response to this assignment, my students have done work borrowing the forms of receipts, a travel sewing kit, grocery store coupons, or bus transfers. One student, for example, used paper dolls as a means of narrating the significance of opening a Planned

²⁴ See Sample Assignment A in the Chapter 4 Appendix for more details.

Parenthood location in her rural home town. By incorporating work with Shapton's text as a model, my students were able to feel free to try out composing techniques of their own. In this case, then, using new media texts as models certainly did not seem to foreclose invention or creativity, but rather allowed my students to imagine a vast number of possibilities for narrating changes in their own lives (and the lives of others within their communities).

Principle 2:

Against the Excerpt, The Whole *IS* the Sum of Its Parts

The second principle, "Principle 2: Against the Excerpt," suggests that we must commit to assigning students readings that are un-excerpted. Using the "whole" of a text will help students gain an understanding of how that piece was crafted and arranged from beginning to end. I argue that structural models of texts are required if we intend students to develop a thorough knowledge of how to conceive of textual structures in their own writing.

Some of the most popular textbooks in our field have relied heavily on excerpts from social theorists and critics. These readings are excerpted in order to present readers with the value of the ideas they present. In the preface of the popular textbook *Making Sense: Constructing Knowledge in the Arts and Sciences*, Coleman et. al write:

The many thesis-driven readings in *Making Sense* present arguments about issues that will engage and stimulate students. These argumentative readings are substantive and intellectually enriching, yet accessible, and they help students to improve their own writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. (xxiii)

By selecting readings that are “thesis driven,” the authors seem concerned that the ideas in the readings are “substantive” or “intellectually enriching.” However, While *Making Sense* does incorporate excerpts from giants in their respective fields like “Clifford Geertz ... Thomas Kuhn ... [and] Annie Dillard” among others, these selections are most often not complete works, and therefore make it difficult to see how such authors organized, styled, and originally delivered their projects. Despite the way that these readings are cleaved from their formal contexts, Coleman et. al depend on the quality of the *ideas* to link readers to a sense of community. They state, “We hope that the breadth of these writers’ experiences helps students to understand the importance of reading and writing as a means to communicating within and between groups” (xiii). While a wide array of ideas from various excerpts might allow us to recognize that textual forms and conventions vary (generally speaking) across discourse communities, I suggest that readers are not able to understand the nuances of textual conventions (especially the conventions of structure) by reading a few excerpted pages. In other words, a student cannot understand how Dillard might have opened her story, or how the significance of the consequences of Geertz’s study was written into the structure of the writing. While student might understand, for example, how Kuhn defined discovery, they won’t ever be able (from merely an excerpt) to address how he constructed the whole of his argument.

What is perhaps most concerning about excerpts is that they are so widely used in so many of our central textbooks. Above, I discussed the use of “thesis-driven” excerpts in *Making Sense*, but other textbooks rely on such readings as well. In the 7th Edition of *Ways of Reading* by David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky, for example, the authors

include readings from Edward Said, Walker Percy, Alice Walker, Mary Louise Pratt, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean Baudrillard, John Berger, Michel Foucault, Susan Bordo, and Adrienne Rich, among others. Of the twenty-five selections in the reader, only three are un-excerpted. This shows the weight assigned to the value of the critical “idea” over form in our field.

While it might be necessary at moments during a composition course to zoom in, to look closely at a few pages or a paragraph of a text in isolation from its whole, I argue that students are best served when we discuss writing choices and strategies in relation to a text’s purpose (to discuss its parts always in relation to its whole). And for that reason, I am sure to assign students texts as “whole” units (or in the way they were originally published). When working with such readings, I ask students to make sense of the various “parts” of the text — the many strategies it employs — in relation to one another and to the whole²⁵. As part of the Writing Program Administration (WPA) team at the University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee, we developed such an assignment that asked students to consider “interpretive” questions while reading an essay by Charles Baxter. The questions (originally generated by the WPA team, but then later revised and re-constructed by students in our classrooms) asked students to make sense of different (and sometimes seemingly contradictory) claims in Baxter’s essay. These “interpretive” questions were intended to help students develop more in-depth and sophisticated analysis of the text. By forcing students to look not simply to interesting *moments* in the text, but to consider all facets of the text in relation to the whole of purpose, students are able to develop more

²⁵ See Sample Assignment B in the Chapter 4 Appendix for more details.

nuanced readings that can best respond to what matters to Baxter, other writers, other readers, and to them. If students read primarily textual excerpts, considering the structures of texts is practically impossible. And, perhaps more importantly, considering how composers structure their work to craft specific responses in their audience members is equally as difficult.

Principle 3:

Reading to Remix, Considering Conventions of Form, Arrangement and Style

The third principle, “Reading to Remix” refers to how we can use the conventions in texts as a means to ask students to begin to consider shaping their own writing. By asking students to consider not only the conventions of text, but the conventions of their communities, we can foster a recognition in students that just like the communities to which they belong, the texts we read always stem from the concerns, behaviors, fears, triumphs, or anxieties of a given community.

One way I ask my students to think about convention is to observe one of the communities they inhabit for the duration of an hour and take notes on the “conventions” of that social space²⁶. In completing this assignment, for example, I’ve had students write about the “conventions” of church services, hair salons, gym locker rooms, and foreign language classrooms, car repair facilities, and fine dining establishments. I ask the students to write down a list of any conventions they notice (as well as what conventions seem to be “broken” in the spaces they observe). Students write up a two-page reflection on the conventions of their chosen social space to try and explain the rationale of those

²⁶ See Sample Assignment C-1 in the Chapter 4 Appendix for more details.

conventions to outsiders (someone who might be completely unfamiliar with that space). After students have completed this assignment, I then ask them to do the same thing for the text that we read²⁷. Students make a list of the conventions the author seems to be adhering to, as well as the conventions they appear to be breaking. Most importantly, students try to then connect the conventions utilized (and not utilized) by the author to explain what the author is trying to do. This assignment has been very successful in helping students see a connection between social conventions, writing convention, and purpose. It has also been a useful prompt in getting students to recognize the social nature of text, or to see texts as reflective of concerns that are very much alive (and to then see writing as a viable means of expressing their own concerns). Like social conventions that are always being negotiated, I believe this assignment lends a view of textual conventions as flexible, negotiable, and always shifting. Again, the texts we read, while modeling possible conventions, seem to only underscore how such conventions are useful strategies available for appropriating, and for eventually inventing a text of one's own.

In conclusion, the first three principles have suggested a view of reading in the writing classroom as modeling, or as useful in making writing conventions visible for students. Firstly, I argue that we must choose new media-like texts to make conventions most visible to students, especially in the first weeks of our classes. We can then bridge these discussions with other, more traditional texts if desired, but if we wish our students to use form in ways that best and most complexly communicate with their audiences, then it is only sensible that the texts they read should do the same. Secondly, if we want

²⁷ See Sample Assignment C-2 in the Chapter 4 Appendix for more details.

our students to understand and utilize arrangement in sophisticated ways, then it makes sense that we should use the whole of the text, and to lend ample class time to discussing how writers utilize structure to craft their purposes; how the purpose or “meaning” of a text can’t be extracted from the form it takes. Finally, I have suggested that specifically drawing students’ attention to the range of conventions in a text (and drawing parallels between textual and social conventions) is helpful in fostering an understanding of composing as a process that links textual conventions to possibilities for invention in response to our social worlds.

A Pedagogy of Persistence: Principles for Writing Practices

Reading and writing are in themselves subversive acts. What they subvert is the notion that things have to be the way they are, that you are alone, that no one has ever felt the way you have. — Mark Vonnegut

What is interesting about Mark Vonnegut’s assertion here is that we have spent a great deal of time in our field over the last thirty-five years believing that students must take on politically charged discussions in order to subvert dominant power structures, to fight inequality, and work towards the greater good. Yet, Vonnegut seems to believe the power of reading and writing comes in not the political weight or significance of the *content*, but in one’s ability to connect and communicate with others, to express things we perhaps can’t articulate very easily in other mediums. Reading and writing are “in themselves subversive acts,” because we don’t need to use these tools toward particular, explicit political agendas or ideologies. Rather reading and writing are always malleable tools that already (and inherently) serve a variety of social and political purposes. I have talked a lot throughout this project about the social and civic function of our work as

writing teachers. But I have done so hesitantly, because I know that often these claims carry with them a kind of explicit socially and politically charged concept of what our classrooms might look like. In my experience teaching writing, especially introductory writing courses, I have found that sometimes the explicit politics of our curriculums has the effect of shutting certain students out of the discussion. Although we have often asked students to write about looming political and social issues in our classrooms, Vonnegut's statement reminds me that sometimes the social and political considerations we want our students to consider are best approached through more subtly addressing the forms that texts take in relation to idea (rather than simply focusing on the radical content). That is, some of the strongest writing I've seen my students do wasn't work that attempted to lobby for environmental policies or ban GMOs . But some of the most compelling and nuanced writing I've seen in my courses has stemmed from political and social concerns that are rooted in the personal. During this past year, for example, one of my basic writing students wrote a paper on how her feeling about wearing her family's Native-American regalia in public has shifted since the "Native-American" fashion has been co-opted by hipster culture. Another one of my basic writing students wrote an essay on her experiences serving as a medic in Iraq. She began her essay by telling the story of how she watched a 9 year-old Iraqi boy die. While she vigorously worked to save the boy's life, she was called names by his father who blamed all Americans for killing his son. Both of these students felt uncomfortable talking explicitly about the politics of race and nationhood, but by talking about their experiences in relation to the conventions of story and text, they were able to use writing in ways that were undeniably "subversive." They

were able to say things that were difficult for them to say, and difficult for those in the communities they inhabited to hear. But in the course of just 16 weeks, they used writing to do this work. The next three principles are intended to highlight the social and civic work that we can do through writing, but to approach this through the lens of arrangement and convention (rather than through privileging the “content” of such work).

Principle 4:

Room for Play?: Convention as Foundation for Experimentation

The fourth principle in my Pedagogy of Persistence suggests that in order to get students to see the nuanced connection between form and convention and the purposes in their writing, they need to experiment and “play” with a variety of forms. In the opening weeks of my course, I often ask students to test out composing in at least three or four forms. Students might compose videos, audio essay, photo-essays, print-based essays with various kinds of structures, or simple websites. Often, at the beginning of the course, the choices they make about relationship between what they are trying to say, and how they are trying to say it is rather arbitrary. However, through a series of revisions, students are able to select more appropriate forms that more readily express their purposes. It is the initial failures (failures that are the result of “play” or experimentation) that make the development of later drafts possible.

For example, I mentioned above that one of my students developed a project that took the form of a sewing kit after doing his assignment in response to Leanne Shapton’s text. A much earlier iteration of that assignment was a video he had made on the social history of the “button.” During his critique, our class talked at length about how his first

essay felt unsatisfying, because while the video form was able to show us a lot of interesting images of buttons, we lost the “feel,” the material nature of that history as we experienced it on screen. During the Shapton assignment, my student chose to take up the issue of “disposal clothing,” or shoddy clothing made in sweatshops that was easier to discard than repair. He told this community narrative through the form of a travel sewing kit, and during his next critique that class was inspired by the way his shift in form was able to shape his purpose in racial and rich directions. It is this willingness to test out different forms in the early stages of writing that allows us to try and fail, but to eventually, as my students in that particular class might say, “get it just right.”

Principle 5:

Moving Back and Forth, Remixing Drafts Through Arrangement

In Chapter 2, I talked about using the concept of “remix” toward the ends of highlighting arrangement rather than invention. Building on Principle four, Principle five asks students to translate one of the projects into a different form in order to help them better consider aspects of the initial draft.

In teaching an introductory college writing course, my students often struggle with the idea that they don’t have to mindlessly follow the rigid conventions they’ve learned in high school. Their first drafts often have introductions with “thesis” statements, and move on to offer definitions from Webster’s dictionary or, these days, dictionary.com. In order to help my students generate more fruitful structures for their essays, I ask them to “remix” their drafts by putting them into audio form²⁸. By listening

²⁸ See Sample Assignments D-1 and D-2 in the Chapter 4 Appendix for more details.

to example of audio essays that start with narrative bits, or compelling questions or contradictions, students are encouraged to do the same in their own audio essays. In my experience, once students start composing in audio form, they feel free to break the oversimplified conventions they adhere to in writing their traditional texts. By writing the scripts for their audio essays, and then performing and recording the essays, students are well-positioned to go back to their more “traditional” academic essays and negotiate form, arrangement, and structure in smarter, sounder, and ultimately more satisfying ways.

Principle 6:
Reflecting on Craft

In many of our first-year composition classrooms, students usually compose at least two kinds of writing: writing that adheres to some form of “academic” conventions, as well as “reflective” writing. Thus far in this project, I haven’t said much about reflective writing, but reflective work plays a pivotal role in our field, and I certainly include reflective elements in my Pedagogy of Persistence. Principle six suggests that our students should craft reflective work that specifically hones a narrow aspect of craft relevant to their reading, writing, and revision process. In other words, instead of reflecting on the *whole process* of composing their essay, students should talk specifically about their knowledge of a particular aspect of composing and its relation to their purpose. Students might write, for example, on the conventions of quotation, arrangement, grammar, considerations of style, or genre.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, one of the main borrowings I feel that we can take from creative writing and the arts is to have students read and compose texts that are often referred to in other fields as “craft essays.” Texts such as John Gardner’s *The Art of Fiction*, Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Joan Silber’s *The Art of Time in Fiction*, or Charles Baxter’s *Burning Down the House* are profoundly useful for writers learning how to craft texts in those genres: namely, short stories, novels, and comics. But often our students in rhetoric and composition are crafting texts that don’t neatly adhere to those genres, and so the usefulness of those kinds of craft essays is somewhat limited (although not necessarily lacking in value altogether).

When teaching visual composition, I have also used Molly Bang’s *Picture This*, and I have occasionally used Strunk and White’s version of *Elements of Style* (the edition illustrated by Maira Kalman is my favorite). These texts draw students’ attention to a *wide range* of possible conventions students might employ; however, the main use in all of these texts — in my classrooms, anyway — is that they are excellent models for reflective work. That is, just as these writers speak as experts on particular aspects of craft, I see the function of my students’ reflective work as to become “experts” at certain aspects of the craft in their projects throughout the course of the semester.

By asking students to speak about an element of craft (and the ways working out that element in their writing helped them achieve their purpose), my students get the additional advantage of crafting an essay that has a potentially much broader audience. What I mean is this: instead of just reflecting on the work that they’ve done for the satisfaction of their teacher or their peers, my students have written engaging and

carefully shaped essays on everything from the varying conventions of quotation (considering who we quote and when we might quote them) to the use of the semi-colon²⁹.

While I wish that we had readily available forms in our field that spoke to the craft of academic writing in more exciting and nuanced ways, I know that my students have gained something of value from considering particular conventions of their work, and reflecting on *why* and *how* they employed those conventions in accordance (or not) with other writers in the discourse community within which they were working. Through this more narrow approach to reflection, students have space to delve into a particular convention or specific set of conventions and to draw relationships on their own compositions and the compositions of others.

A Pedagogy of Persistence: Principles for Revising Practices

Murder your darlings. — Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *On the Art of Writing*, 1916

Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what it is one is saying. — John Updike

Several years ago the Director of Composition in our program, Dennis Lynch, told me a story. He recounted a meeting where he was communicating with others at the university level about what we wanted our students to take from our first-year writing sequence. After thinking about all of our explicitly stated course goals and program documents, what came to him was this: he said that if he could really distill the value of a composition course, it would be in offering students the opportunity to thoroughly revise a text.

²⁹ See Sample Assignment E in the Chapter 4 Appendix for more details.

This story struck me as profound. Suddenly, the many tasks that needed to be accomplished in a first-year writing classroom seemed less daunting. And at its core, stating that revision was the most valuable asset offered by our classes seemed true. We wanted our students to walk away from our classrooms having had the experience of writing a text, and revising it again and again. When I feel most exasperated with my teaching, I remind myself of that story. I still find comfort in knowing that if I can craft a space where my students can accomplish such a task, they will have *really* learned something. Over the years, however, my recollection of that story has given me pause. It has caused me to consider why many of our writing classrooms don't assign *more* weight to what is likely the most important work of any writing class.

In my classrooms today, I do my best to make clear that revision is the central task for my students. I have even gone so far as to redistribute the weight of the way I calculate grades to reflect my deep valuing of the revision process. But because revision is such hard work, and because our students often come into our classrooms having so little experience in knowing exactly how to do it, I have found that I must be attentive in the ways I ask students to approach the work of revision. While I discussed aspects of how I build in revision in the three writing principles above (Principles 4-6), these final three principles are intended to specifically address my approaches to this important work.

Principle 7:

Commitment: Making it Work

One of the most popular calls within the body of scholarship on new media today has been the call for production (New London Group 2000; Wysocki 2004; Hull and

Nelson 2005; Shipka 2005). Pedagogical models have encouraged our students to produce widely, testing out a vast array of modalities and writing strategies. As I discussed in the previous section, I am certainly a proponent of this turn in our discipline (I want my students to experiment widely, and find pleasure in doing so); however, what concerns me about many of these pedagogies is that I wonder how composing broadly detracts from the process of revision. While I want my students to recognize the connection between selecting the forms and conventions they will employ in their writing and *what they can say*, ultimately I believe we are responsible for guiding students through the process of committing to a particular project, and laboring for hours on that project in order to see it through. By the end of the semester, I want my students to believe that they have produced something that is strong, powerful, and effective in conveying its intended purpose.

I have found on occasion that certain students are resistant to this logic. They prefer to “start over,” to experiment again and again, and have trouble deciding on what they call “an idea” or “a topic.” Although I have not found a perfect way of addressing the hesitancy of these students, one way I have worked to discourage this is to require students to write a composing plan early on in the semester. The composing plan attempts to get students to articulate why what they are doing matters, and to make clear what kinds of formal choices their project might require. While revision can be taxing work, it is work that is often ultimately the most rewarding in the composing process. We need to first commit to a project before we can truly persist. And so encouraging that commitment earlier in the semester has been valuable in my writing classes.

Another way of thinking about commitment, though, is asking students to commit to a “purpose” for what they compose. Certainly, our purposes shift during the process of composing. But after my students have established purposes that are complex, I work with them on “evening out” their drafts so that these purposes might best be conveyed. I designed an exercise to use in my basic writing classrooms to help foster some of this work³⁰. The activity is called “Controlling Purpose Clue.” In this activity, students cut out their “controlling purpose” (or thesis statement) from their draft or project. The readers of their project then use what remains to reconstruct what they believe might be the “purpose” of the project. If these responses are similar to one another (and/or similar to what the writer had intended), we can see that the project is under control, and is “working.” If there are too many conflicting and varied responses, we use that confusion to talk about how the writer might revise. While initially making a commitment to an idea is difficult for some students, other students struggle with this organizational sense of commitment. But if we view writing as a means of composing, it becomes apparent that both kinds of commitment are necessary.

Principle 8:

Room for Improvement? Leaving Room for Evaluative Comments

One particular aspect of teaching writing that has fallen away with our focus on convention, is our role as “evaluators” in the classroom. As I discussed in Chapter 1,

³⁰ See Sample Assignment F in the Chapter 4 Appendix for further details.

since dismissing convention as unnecessarily rigid and socially oppressive, it seems we have become paralyzed by making explicitly evaluative comments on our student's work. Here, I use the term "evaluation" to refer not to grades, but to discussion with our students about — most broadly — what is working, and what is not. I also mean though, on a more micro-level, discussions of "error."

I have thought extensively about how I can function best as an evaluator of my students' work in my classroom. I have reflected on how I have learned best from those who have evaluated my work, and one thing in particular stands out: repetition. For most of us, the process of composing includes failures, and it is seeing others repeatedly respond to those failures that motivates us to try again, to try harder, and to try composing differently. This might mean making the same grammar mistake repeatedly, and watching those that evaluate our work mark it up again and again. Or it might mean arranging our quotations in ways that confuse readers (only to then be asked for clarification). But whatever the case may be, hearing an array of responses to our work — and noting the consistency across readers — is crucial to considering what it means to significantly revise.

I like to establish evaluation with my students in two ways in my classrooms. I, of course, as their teacher attempt to find comfortable ways of evaluating their work over the course of the semester. But in addition to this evaluation, I also build in several classroom critique sessions that function in similar ways to creative writing workshops or critiques in art classrooms. Sometimes, these are large-group critiques where we look at 2 or 3 projects (as we might do with traditional essays in composition classroom), but other

times I have students walk around the room and evaluate each others' work, taking time to note the consistencies in the comments they receive (and to consider how those comments might lead them to revise)³¹.

Principle 9:

Persisting: Writing Beyond Week 16

The final principle, “Principle 9: Persisting: Writing Beyond Week 16,” is intended to encourage students to extend the work that they have been doing in the space of our classroom out into their own lives. Normally, the end of the semester is the end of a student’s project. They receive a grade for their work, and they take a new set of courses where the process of working toward an eventual end-point repeats itself. While this cycle is ingrained into the structure of most models of higher-education, it is a cycle I aim to disrupt in my pedagogy. And to do that work, I incorporate assignments where my students consider how the work they have completed during the semester might be translated or extended to reach broader audiences.

It is easy to *hope* that our students will continue the work they have been doing during the semester, and to sustain that work in their communities. But pulling such work out beyond the classroom requires us to craft assignments that help move the projects that students are doing in our classrooms out into the worlds they inhabit. This is another way I use reflective work in my classroom. The “literacy” narrative has been a genre that haunts the reflective form (in such narratives students often write relatively un-nuanced stories about their pasts and make claims to have learned something in a given course that

³¹ See Sample Assignment G in the Chapter 4 Appendix for more details.

will radically change their future). To work against the formal constraints of the literacy narrative in reflective work, I ask my students instead to write “forward.” At the end of the semester, in addition to the reflective work on “craft” that they produce (see Principle 6), I ask students to compose a roughly 500-word “Dream it Forward Statement.”³² This assignment asks students to consider the shape their project took throughout the course of the semester, who they hoped the project was addressing, and who they wanted their project to address but didn’t/couldn’t “hear” the project. The focus of the essay is to come up with a “dream” plan (a plan that isn’t limited by resources/technical ability etc), and to imagine what it might take to make that possible. Essentially, this final assignment involves asking students to consider possible revisions to their message, and alternate forms of delivery. It is an assignment that helps them consider what it might take to extend their work, and underscores the notion that their work doesn’t need to end at the close of the semester. My hope is that the “Dream it Forward” statements of my students underscore that their work is their own, that they can persist with it, and that through doing so they can take responsibility for shaping some fragments of their social futures.

Some Final Remarks:**A Pedagogy of Persistence**

I intend the nine principles throughout this chapter to serve as some basis for a dialogue about what it might mean to re-incorporate aspects of convention in our

³² See Sample Assignment H in the Chapter 4 Appendix for further details.

classrooms, and to link convention to invention as a means of developing the mediational portal of access. I hope that I have shown that conventions can be used in our pedagogies in ways that are generative, that foster creativity, and discovery. But the main benefit of balancing our attention between invention and convention is that this work makes it easier for us to consider writing *beyond our classrooms*. It allows us to better recognize that while invention is important in our paths toward social change, writing is inherently a social act, and it is almost always a kind of response (a response that is contingent upon knowledge of existing conventions within a community). As I hope I have expressed throughout these pages, the social and civic goals of writing instruction — while sometimes vague in how we imagine them — are what distinguish our field in a time of social crisis in education in the United States. Our classrooms offer students skills important to living and working in the communities that matter to them, and if we could simply best frame our classes to highlight and expand upon the social and civic functions of writing instruction, then our students would gain more than skills limited to writing history essays or sociology finals. They would learn the rhetorical methodologies for participating in our social and civic spheres through communicating with others. Fundamentally, this is what writing *is*, and if we want students to persist in their work as writers, we should strive to build classrooms that better capture this social and civic quality that is inherent in the act of writing.

CHAPTER 4 APPENDIX: Sample Assignments

Sample Assignment A

Last week we read and discussed Leanne Shapton's *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris*. Shapton uses the form of an auction catalog to tell the story of the dissolution of a the relationship between Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris. Our discussion on Thursday focused on what strategies Shapton used to signal an "ending."

For next week, select a "borrowed form" (e.g. a pamphlet, a board game, pawn shop tickets, library records, a course catalog, a poster, or a series of letters, etc.) to tell the story of a "beginning" or an "ending" of a significant event in your community. In other words, while Shapton used an auction catalogue to tell the story of an end to a relationship, select your own borrowed form to tell a story relevant to your life and the lives of others.

Bring your in-process draft to class on Tuesday for discussion. This assignment is due on Thursday of next week.

Sample Assignment B

Interpretive Questions: In-class Exercise

Interpretive questions ask you to connect observations that you have made when reading a text to other observations you have made. Different ways of reading help you make observations and help you make connections. All of this activity is or should be productive for you. What do you think you are trying to accomplish by reading these texts?

In the way of reading we call “rhetorical analysis,” interpretive questions nudge you from just making observations to seeing or treating what you have observed as “choices.” Then, this way of reading further nudges you from seeing observations as choices to *explaining* them as choices (that is to explaining how these choices might further the writer’s purpose, given her or his context and audience). Your explanations are always provisional (subject to change or revision), but they should hold together with other observations (seen as choices) that you have made.

Eventually I am going to ask you to struggle with isolating and developing your own interpretive questions, but for now I want you to focus your struggle on using the rhetorical analysis you have done so far to discuss several questions I have provided. In particular, I encourage you to look for questions that do not seem to fit with your current sense of Baxter’s essay and what he seems to you to be trying to do in it. Look for questions that seem to go in a different direction than you have been going or to point to parts of the essay to which you have not paid much attention.

QUESTIONS

1. The titles of parts of Baxter’s essay (numbered, titled) may seem curious to you. The first one includes the word “memory” and the last one includes the word “forgetting.” In between there are three parts that also include the words “memory” and “forgetting,” as well as the word “memoir.” What do you make of the movement back and forth in the essay between memory (remembering) and forgetting?

Sample Assignment B (continued)

2. The title of the essay may suggest to you that there is shame in forgetting (in the information age), but the title of the last part suggests that forgetting may be necessary. How might you reconcile the possibility that Baxter thinks — wants us to think — that forgetting is both shameful and necessary?
3. In section three, Baxter refers to Walter Benjamin's distinction between a memory for information and a memory for experiences. Is Baxter's overall point in the essay that one is superior to the other? In what ways might he think that a memory for information is either good or bad, either useful or problematic, relative to a memory for experiences?
4. In both the first part on his brother and in the third part on Benjamin, Baxter suggests that memory — remembering — is a valuable practice, but in part two he points out that two very popular former US presidents found it a useful practice to forget or be forgetful or feign forgetfulness. How do you square these parts of Baxter's essay?
5. In the last lines of the essay, Baxter refers to what he calls “the strategic amnesia of everyday life” (157). What does he mean by this, and how does it fit with the affection he feels for his brother's ability to remember people's names and daily experiences?
6. In part four, Baxter seems to talk positively about people's written memoirs and links them to the memory for experiences and story telling. Why then does he spend much of that part talking about memoirs that recount “dysfunctional families” and other negative experiences?
7. In part four, Baxter spends time talking about memoirs about dysfunctional families and in the last part he spends time talking about novels about forgetfulness. What attitudes does he encourage us to take toward these literatures and how are they connected to “shame and forgetting in the information age”?
8. In part one, Baxter offers an anecdote about his brother — he tells us of the time that his brother took him along on one of the brother's dates with a girl. You might find it a touching scene, but aside from its emotional appeal, what does it have to do with “shame and forgetting in the information age”?

Sample Assignment C-1

Considering Social Conventions: Writing the “Rules” of Your Community

For this assignment, consider yourself an ethnographer. Gather a notebook and pen, and select a place to sit for one hour. During your time observing, make sure to record all of the “rules” or conventions that become apparent to you. For example, if you visit a movie theater, you might notice signs that prohibit cell phone use or loud talking. But you might also observe that people seem reluctant to leave their seats after the movie has started, and that the presence of small children during certain kinds of films is unlikely. Note as many “rules” or conventions (both explicitly stated and tacitly agreed upon) as you can.

Then... on a separate sheet of paper, list all of the rules that seem to be broken in the social space.

Finally, write up a two-page “field report” summarizing your notes in the first paragraph and then reflecting upon what you observed. Assume that your “field report” will be read by someone from a foreign country who may not have “insider” knowledge of what you observed. Explain to your reader why the rules you observed exist. What are those rules trying to preserve, protect, or prevent?

Bring your notes and your “field report” to our next class meeting.

Sample Assignment C-2

Considering Textual Conventions: The “Rules” of Writing in a Community

Today in class we discussed the “conventions” of some of the social spaces in your communities. For this next assignment, we’re going to turn our skills as ethnographers toward a written text. For next week, carefully read Valerie Laken’s short story “Separate Kingdoms.” As you read, note any conventions to which Laken adheres. Again, note what “rules” her story seems to break.

Then, write a field-report on Laken’s story explaining why she might follow the rules that she does in her writing given what she accomplishes. Conversely, why might she seem to violate certain rules in order to make her story communicate what it does?

Once again, bring your notes and your “field report” to class on Thursday.

Sample Assignment D-1

Revising Your Essay #1 Openings: Considering Arrangement & Style

Progress is impossible without change, and those who
cannot change their minds cannot change anything.
—George Bernard Shaw

Last week we re-made our Essay #1 drafts into audio essays. After the listening session in class, many of us noted that we made significant changes to the arrangement and style of our written essays as we translated them into audio form.

Today we'll be—as Shaw suggests above—making “progress” on our Essay #1 revisions. Specifically, we'll be revising the opening paragraphs of our original, written version of Essay #1 by borrowing strategies we used when composing our audio essays. In other words, we're going to use our audio essays to generate new ideas for composing the opening paragraphs of our more traditionally written texts.

Sometimes when we've just composed something, we might feel too close to it to fully see its nuances. Accordingly, in order to help each other think through possibilities for revising our opening paragraphs today, we're going to read/listen to each other's work in pairs. You and your colleague will read and listen to both forms of each other's essays as well as your own. We'll make notes in the margins of the written essays, and thoroughly fill out answers to the questions on the Peer Review Feedback Form.

To get started let's pair up, swap work, and follow the steps listed on the Peer Review Feedback Form. Once we've reviewed our colleague's essays, we'll repeat these steps with our own draft.

By the end of class today, we should all have some great leads on how we might revise the opening paragraphs of Essay #1. After carefully reviewing the feedback on what our written work might “borrow” from our audio essay, we'll re-write a new opening to our Essay #1 before next class.

Please submit both your original and revised written essays to “Dropbox” before our next class. Make sure each of the drafts are clearly labeled (“ORIGINAL ESSAY #1” and “REVISED ESSAY #1: OPENINGS”). As always, I will collect the Peer Review Forms at the beginning of our next class meeting.

Good luck to all of you. Make many changes, make much progress!

Sample Assignment D-2

Peer Review Feedback Form

Revising Your Essay # 1 Introduction: Considering Arrangement & Style

Your name, please: _____ Composer's name: _____

Step 1: Read through the entire draft of Essay #1 without making any marks.

Step 2: Listen to the audio essay in entirety. As you listen, make notes on a separate sheet of paper (and in the space below, when relevant) about aspects of the audio essay that might be useful to the composer. Listen carefully for the composer's purpose, as well as for moments that you find particularly engaging.

Step 3: Re-read the first page or so of Essay #1. Use our "Class Editor's Key" to mark what you find interesting, confusing, surprising, etc. As always, explain your editorial marks briefly in the margins of the draft.

Step 4: Fill out the below Feedback Form. As always, once you have completed your peer feedback, allow your colleague 5 minutes to review your feedback to ask any questions.

Once you are finished, repeat these steps with your own draft.

As you listened to the audio essay, what three moments struck you as particularly intriguing or noteworthy? Explain to the writer what it was about these moments that helped you become invested in her/his purpose.

1.

2.

3.

Sample Assignment D-2 (continued)

What is the writer's purpose in Essay #1 (quote specifically from their text)? What is the purpose of her/his audio essay (again, quote this)?

Essay 1:

Audio Essay:

How might the writer revise the purpose of their written text to incorporate interesting material from the audio essay? Please suggest specific possibilities for re-stating the purpose below.

Consider for a moment the opening two sentences from the written essay. How might these best be revised by borrowing from the audio essay. Please record two specific possibilities for the opening sentences below and explain why you are suggesting these.

1.

2.

Sample Assignment E

Building the Basis for Your Craft Essay: Finding Examples

Over the course of the semester, we have read several texts that specifically talk about craft. We've read Mike Bunn's "How to Read like a Writer," and a chapters from Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, Molly Bang's *Picture This*, as well as excerpts from Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.

Revisit your reflective craft responses to determine how you'd like to focus your reflective essay. To help you make your decision, you might want to ask yourself a question first: what single thing did I learn about writing this semester that made it most possible for me to complete my project as I did.

After you've answered the above question, find examples of how you thought about this matter in your own work. If you're writing a print-based essay, copy and paste your examples into your craft piece. If you are working in another form, take pictures or screenshots to show what you're talking about.

Then, search for examples of how other writers employ these same considerations or strategies. In other words, find examples of the aspect of craft you are considering in other texts, too.

Bring these examples to our next class meeting (you should have no fewer than 8-12 examples total).

Sample Assignment F (continued)

4. Are there any “misleading clues”? In other words, are there places where you feel the writer should link back to the controlling purpose but doesn’t seem to? Where do you feel off track in the essay? Please draw squiggly lines under these places and record the two places that you feel are most unclear below:

5. Please take statements from each body paragraph. Look to the topic sentences and the analysis portions of the paragraph. What one sentence from each body paragraph do you feel most closely echos the missing controlling purpose?

6. What about the conclusion? What ideas from the intro and body of the paper are represented there? What ideas fall off the radar? What ideas are not represented in the conclusion and should be?

7. After carefully examining all parts of the essay, we’re now ready to come up with a profile. Write down what you believe to be the controlling purpose in the space below. What does it say? What does it want readers to do/believe? Why does it want readers to do this? Re-write the controlling purpose below as if you were the writer of this essay (In other words, don’t write to the writer about the controlling purpose. Instead, write the actual controlling purpose in the space below.) We’ll see how closely your profile matches the missing purpose. Thanks for your service on the case!

Sample Assignment G

Peer Critique Form

1. What do you see as the “purpose” of this project? How do you know? Where did you locate that purpose?

2. What is unclear to you in this project? Was there anything that confused you? What questions do you have?

3. What did you find most compelling, interesting, or successful in this project?

4. What suggestions do you have for how this project might be improved?

5. If you could add something truly spectacular to this project, what might it be?

Sample Assignment H

Composing Your “Dream It Forward” Statement

There is nothing like a dream to create the future. — Victor Hugo

So far this semester, you’ve composed a project that you’ve remixed and heavily revised. I know many of you are all feeling proud of the work you’ve accomplished this semester, but now it’s time to dream bigger.

Begin your “Dream It Forward” statement with a short description of what you have produced, what you wanted to accomplish by making the project that you did, and who you imagine your project might have influenced or impacted. Then, silently pat yourself on the back for all of that hard work, and brace yourself, because the next step is difficult.

Who didn’t hear/view/see your project, and what would it take to get those people to consider your work? How could you revise your project to address those people? What forms, genres, venues, etc. might you employ to accomplish that work?

The main portion of your “Dream It Forward” statement should be a description of your hopes, plans, and dreams for carrying your project into the future. Don’t assume that you will suddenly have millions of dollars at your disposal to make this happen, but certainly don’t feel limited by reasonable constraints. In other words, dream a little...

Your statement should be about 2-3 pages (no shorter, but definitely not too much longer). It should concisely communicate what you might do beyond this semester, and how, if you were to aim more broadly, you might craft your message differently for a broader audience.

Please bring your typed, stapled “Dream It Forward” statement to our next class meeting.

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- . "Impossibly distinct: On form/content and word/image in two pieces of computer-based interactive multimedia." *Computers and Composition* 18 (2001): 137-62. Print.
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EDUCATION

Ph.D. Rhetoric and Composition, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (May 2014)

M.A. Linguistics, Department of English, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (2008)

Thesis: “Negotiating a Virtual Voice on the Forum Floor: The structure and function of language ‘error’ corrections in online forums”

B.A. Sociology, Northeastern Illinois University (2005)

Honors Thesis: “Articulated Americans: Negotiating Nationality and the Discourse of Language and Identity”

DISSERTATION

Title: “A Pedagogy of Persistence: Access through Arrangement in the Age of New Media.”

Committee: Anne Frances Wysocki (chair), Dennis A. Lynch, Valerie Laken, Alice Gillam, and Donna Pasternak

PUBLICATIONS

Kontny, Jennifer. “‘I totally disagree with you and let me tell you why...’: How Adolescent Girls Create Expert Knowledge in Disputes on Internet Forums.” In Nancy Mae Antrim (ed.), *Seeking Identity: Language in Society*. New Castle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press. 2007. Print.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- “A Revisionist History of Access in the Age of Multimodal Media” (drafting for *CCC*)
- “Recognizing the Roots of ‘Remix’: Re-Considering Imitation through New Media” (drafting for *Computers and Composition*)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

New media composing; multimodal writing; theories of craft and arrangement; literacy and the histories of social access; visual rhetoric; digital literacies; textual structures and narrative; basic writing; writing program administration

ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

2009–2011 English 101 Course Coordinator, Department of English

2008–2009 Online Course Coordinator, Department of English

2007–2012 Instructional Mentor to Graduate Teaching Assistants (English 101, 102, Online English)

2007–2011 Writing Program Administration Committee Member

AWARDS

2013	Chancellor's Award, UWM Department of English
2012	Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship, UWM Graduate School
2012	Chancellor's Award, UWM Department of English
2011	Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowship, UWM Graduate School
2010	Excellence in Teaching Award, UWM Department of English
2008	Sappenfield Award, UWM Department of English
2007–12	Graduate Student Travel Award, UWM Department of English
2005	Chancellor's Award, UWM Graduate School
2002–05	Northeastern Illinois University Honors Fellowship
2002–05	Northeastern Illinois University Travel Award
2001	Linda Weiss Scholarship for Studies in French

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2005–present University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, Department of English

FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION COURSES

- English 095: Fundamentals of Composing
- English 101: Introduction to College Writing
- English 101: Introduction to College Writing (online)
- English 102: College Writing and Research
- English 102: College Writing and Research (online)
- English 105: College Writing Workshop

UPPER-LEVEL COURSES

- English 201: Strategies for Academic Writing (the history of print literacy and the book form)
- English 201: Strategies for Academic Writing (multi-modal literacies)
- English 233: Introduction to Creative Writing
- English 240: Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture: The Visual Rhetorics of Fashion and Design

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2005–2009 Research Assistant, UWM Department of English; P.I. Patricia Mayes

NATIONAL CONFERENCE PAPERS

“Arrangement and the Structuring of Emotion through Narrative.” Rhetoric Society of America, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. May, 2012.

“Recognizing the Roots of Rhetorical Agency: Considering Conventional, Inventional and Mediational forms of Social Access.” CCCC, St. Louis, Missouri. March, 2012.

“Back to the Drafting Board: Re-Patterning Our Concept of Textual Materiality through a Rhetorical Analysis of Michelle Obama.” CCCC, Atlanta, Georgia. April, 2011.

“‘Did you spell all of those words wrong on purpose?’: Online ‘Error’ Correction Sequence as a Pre-emptive Strategy.” LISO, Orlando, Florida. June, 2009.

“Writing (Out) Consciousness: Pushing at Boundaries of Reflectivity in the Writing Classroom.” CCCC, San Francisco, California. March, 2009.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE PAPERS (continued)

“I totally disagree with you and let me tell you why...”: How Adolescent Girls Create Expert Knowledge in Disputes on Internet Forums.” Writing Research Across Borders, Santa Barbara, California. June, 2008.

“Usurping the virtual floor: Online “error” correction sequences as pre-emptive strategies.” The Conference for Culture, Language and Social Practice, Boulder, Colorado. October, 2007.

“Hell in the Homeland: Empathy, Entitlement and Forging a Collective Identity in an Iraqi Christian Diaspora Youth Newsgroup.” Conference on Dialogue Under Occupation, Chicago, Illinois. November, 2006.

“I totally disagree with you and let me tell you why ...”: How Adolescent Girls Create Expert Knowledge on Internet Forums.” Southwest Popular Culture Association, Albuquerque, New Mexico. February, 2006.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

“Apparitions.” United We Read Series. Boswell Books, Milwaukee WI. October, 2011.

“Telling Tales?: Reflective Narratives, Critical Pedagogy, and Inventing 101 Student Identities.” Poster presentation at Marquette University Writing Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. December, 2005.

“Articulated Americans: Negotiating Nationality and the Discourse of Language and Identity.” Paper presented at the Midwest Sociological Society, Minneapolis, Minnesota. April, 2005.

“(In)visible boundaries: A sociological perspective on undergraduate general education in inner-city colleges.” Panel presentation at a joint general education conference at Northwestern University and Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Illinois. February, 2005.

UWM DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATIONS

WORKSHOPS

- “Strategies for Revision, Editing & Working with Language Conventions.” August, 2013.
- “Revising Student Texts & The DK Handbook.” August, 2012.
- “Grading Conferences: A Dialogue on Assessment.” August, 2008.

FORUMS

- “Strategies for Revision: Complicating Audience.” April, 2010.
- “Possibilities for Online Discussions: Talking Through D2L.” October, 2008. (Co-presented with Andre Buchenot.)
- “Texts and Contexts: Negotiating ‘Academic’ Sources in the 102 Classroom.” February, 2007.

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

- “What do we ask our student to do? Produce a Portfolio.” August, 2011.
- “Considering what it meant to Produce a ‘Portfolio’.” August, 2009.
- “Demystifying the Portfolio Process.” August, 2008. (Co-presented with John Raucci.)
- “Incorporating Reflection in Commentary on ‘Interpretive’ Essays.” August, 2007.
- “Re-casting Reflection: Talking about Critical Reflection and Reflective Goals.” August, 2006.

SERVICE

- 2013 UWM Committee on Assessment, Member
- 2013 English 101 Textbook Committee, Member
- 2012 English 102 Mentoring Committee, Mentor
- 2011 English 101 Curriculum Planning Committee, Chair
- 2011 English 101 Textbook Committee, Chair
- 2010–11 Writing Program Administrative Committee, English 101 Course Coordinator
- 2011 Committee on Program Assessment, Member; Course Coordinator
- 2010 Pilot Committee on Program Assessment, Member; Course Coordinator
- 2009–11 Composition Advisory Committee, Member
- 2008–09 Writing Program Administrative Committee, Online Course Coordinator
- 2008 English 102 Reflective Goals Committee, Member
- 2008 English 101 Textbook Committee, Member
- 2007 English 105 Committee, Member