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## Introduction

### RHETORIC AND WRITING FOR ETHOS DEVELOPMENT, NOT TRANSFER

*To come out of scenes like these schools [NYC public schools] and be offered a “chance” to compete as an equal in the world of academic credentials, the white-collar world, the world beyond the minimum wage or welfare, is less romantic for the student than for those who view the process from a distance. The student who leaves the campus at three or four o’clock after a day of classes, goes to work as a waitress or clerk, or hash-slinger, or guard, comes home at ten or eleven o’clock to a crowded apartment with the TV audible in every corner—what does it feel like to this student to be reading, say, Byron’s “Don Juan” or Jane Austen for class the next day? . . . How does one compare this experience of college with that of the Columbia students down at 116th Street in their quadrangle of gray stone dormitories, marble steps, flowered borders, wide spaces of time and architecture in which to talk and think? . . . Do “motivation” and “intellectual competency” mean the same for those students as for City College undergraduates on that overcrowded campus where in winter there is often no place to sit between classes, with two inadequate bookstores largely filled with required texts, two cafeterias and a snack bar that are overpriced, dreary, and uncondusive to lingering, with the incessant pressure of time and money driving at them to rush, to get through, to amass the needed credits somehow, to drop out, to stay on with gritted teeth?*

—Adrienne Rich, “Teaching Language in Open Admissions”

#### EXCELSIOR: EVER UPWARD?

In the east stairwell of my office building there hangs a vine that has somehow crept through an air-conditioning vent. Concrete and fluorescent lights surround the alien tendril. The first time I saw it, I paused in amazement, looking twice, because I wondered how it had grown so large without my noticing.

I’m fixated on this vine because it is a symbol of neglect, decay, and the natural taking over the human made. Most days, the vine

embarrasses me—I walk by it quickly, pretending it’s not there. Other days, I’m angry at it, wanting to rip it out from the ceiling in one violent tug. Some days, I believe it holds all the secrets in the universe but refuses to tell me.

The vine almost always reminds me of the material realities of working at a city university that operates on a shoestring budget.

I want to talk about what it’s like to be a writing-faculty member and administrator at an institution with a vine growing out of the air-conditioning vent. I want to convey how important it is for the field of writing studies to keep the experiences of my students at the forefront of curriculum discussions, to remember their resilience, to remember the systemically unfair ways they’ve been treated, to remember their struggles with schooling. I want to talk about how I perceive the landscape of higher education through the lens of my institution in the City University of New York (CUNY) system, and the ways I see a movement toward efficiency and timeliness to earning a degree—as well as an emphasis on writing as a pragmatic tool—undermining the success of our most vulnerable student populations. I want to investigate why Adrienne Rich’s description in the opening of this chapter about teaching in open admissions at CUNY in the early 70s feels relevant today. I want to talk about how writing programs design curriculum and the ways I think we are ignoring the vine growing in the stairwell by not recognizing the material realities of student lives outside the university.

I want to talk about how we can recover our discipline by reexamining one of its key terms, *ethos*, and how the revival of ethos can begin to shape our thinking about writing and its teaching.

One example of advocacy for efficiency in higher education is the group Complete College America, which has now made CUNY a partner. I first heard about this group during a department meeting where a proposal for an accelerated composition course was being discussed. I looked at my colleague’s PowerPoint slide with, I’m sure, that little crinkle in my brow that I get when I am frustrated. My lips remained pursed. Our CUNY students, the presenter said, take on average three to four years to complete their associate degrees, and Black and Hispanic students on the whole take longer than their white and Asian counterparts. The graphs with percentages were flashed before our eyes, and the data on the screen told a story about deficiency and inefficiency.

Colleges across the nation are reducing or eliminating non-credit-bearing remedial writing courses in favor of models such as corequisites, studios, and accelerated learning programs (ALPs). At CUNY, remedial writing classes will become almost nonexistent by spring 2021. Instead,

students have the option to take non-credit-bearing courses through programs such as CUNYStart or Immersion, yet these programs are not connected to academic departments or taught by CUNY faculty; or, students can take coreq model classes offered through the English departments. Though CUNY students will now be placed in writing through multiple measures rather than testing—a major positive—writing colleagues are concerned that CUNY has brokered its promise to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds by its imperative to “accelerate remediation” (Bernstein 2016, 92).

The Excelsior Scholarship, an initiative sponsored by Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, promises free education to those CUNY students whose family income is under \$100,000 and who meet certain academic requirements—one of those is to graduate on time. The solution: students must take more credits—thirty a year—to stay on track.<sup>1</sup> Research conducted by Complete College America (n.d.) has found that students who take thirty credits in their freshmen year are more likely to succeed in school. And, it is argued, remedial writing slows the progress of a student.<sup>2</sup>

It should be clear here that the loss of writing remediation itself isn't particularly distressing to me—some students will no doubt benefit from being mainstreamed into first-year writing. These models for acceleration, by and large, have been shown to be effective when measured for the outcome of efficiency. However—and this is the distressing part—“success” is only being measured through the lens of “efficiency.” Measures of persistence and retention, as well as student demographic data for these variables, have not been featured as much in the discourses at CUNY or nationally. Also not taken into consideration are the ways writing curricula can encourage a sense of belonging and persistence in college though an engagement of student experience outside the classroom. There should also be a discussion around the quality of educational experience and the ways writing can foster a sense of self and prepare people to be in community. What is writing education for? Why does it matter?

In effect, CUNY's adoption of this acceleration agenda, titled the CUNY Momentum Initiative, plays into the need for efficiency in higher education and promises to move students through our classrooms and into the workplace. As Nancey Welch and Tony Scott (2016) discuss, these discourses of efficiency to “seek the cheapest, fastest route to degree” are a part of education in the age of austerity (4). They particularly highlight how the Obama administration, through its imposition of the College Scorecard, further emphasized that the solution to

fixing higher education enrollment and retention, and thus creating more economic opportunity, wasn't to offer more funding to schools or students but to drown universities and colleges in discourses of *accountability*; this has led to "changes in curriculum, pedagogy," further "tying the 'value' of a college degree to the speed of its completion and the earnings of its recipient" (10). Colleges and universities are becoming beholden to government mandates as the secondary level. This changes the game completely, as universities must show students are meeting competencies on a predetermined rubric, which I believe furthers the ideology that education is a vocational enterprise.<sup>3</sup> If we consider the role of writing in this framework, I fear it will be seen as a skill and not as a way to foster learning and inquiry. Furthermore, this fast tracking of students through our doors may lead to the devaluation of other goals that cannot be so easily quantifiable, such as a students' understanding of abstract ideas like social justice or democracy. Saying that a university, or a system of universities, is doing its job because its graduates are graduating quicker and are now socially mobile only favors a particular index of success and may work to devalue or mask others.

I am trying to sort out where I stand on these issues in higher education as a professional in our field who sometimes wears an administrative hat. I don't mind the discourses of social mobility because I do indeed wish economic success for students. However, I'm distressed by these discourses of efficiency and deficiency, these discourses of measurements and certainty rather than invention and inquiry. What I am seeing too is connections between the national movements of efficiency in higher education and some of the scholarship on disciplinarity in rhetoric and composition, and how these further influence first-year-writing (FYW) curriculum design. Embedding disciplinary knowledge into the FYW class, with strategies like writing about writing (WAW), teaching for transfer (TFT), and threshold concepts (TC), has shifted our emphasis in values to align writing studies with professional entry into more advanced university work. One of the things I think is falling quickly by the wayside in higher education, and in writing instruction, is an attention to the material realities of our students and the lives they are leading outside our institutions. Also, if we focus on writing that names what we know, this focus leaves little space for uncertainty, conflict, and becoming. This focus could translate into a diminished emphasis on exploratory writing, personal writing, and writing for and about community and public issues.

Whenever we are discussing the material and place and people's experiences, whenever we are talking about ourselves in community, these discourses fall under the rhetorical concept of the ethos

appeal—something I think we desperately need at the center of the discipline of teaching writing. I worry we are becoming too corporatized, or, perhaps more accurately, that we're already there. In the corporate university, there seems to be little value or time for the kind of writing I see as central to college students—reflective narratives and research investigations into local community issues.

When we focus too much on outcomes, too much on certainty and display and presentation in writing, we close the door to an exploratory writing that allows time for invention and inquiry, writing that allows us time to reckon with our contrasting ideas and selves, writing that allows us and our readers to potentially see in a new way and be transformed. This kind of writing is done through a process of slowing down, not speeding up; putting your foot on the break, not the accelerator. Like Jessica Restaino (2019) in her book *Surrender: Feminist Rhetoric and Ethics for Love and Illness*, I'm advocating "for broken methods and contradiction, for creativity and too much feeling, for blurred genres and for doing the work that scares us" (12–13). This kind of writing is hard to assess with a rubric—it's not the writing of logos; rather it centers ethos and pathos. When we write from a perspective of inquiry and openness, we dive into what we don't know, what we can't express, and we must work through that scariness and vulnerability. Writing with inquiry at its center traces where we've been, what we've thought, how we've felt rather than stripping all this away by coming to the point and announcing our arrivals.

I see how these movements toward disciplinary content in FYW are responding to institutional pressures and the need to show student success, and although I sometimes find this scholarship and ideology appealing, I still have come to believe that the momentum initiatives on the local and national level, coupled with the current disciplinary writing movements in rhetoric and composition that place faith in the idea of transfer, erase the material realities of students, especially those in precarious positions, and their experiences outside the university. They also deemphasize the magic of writing, the uncertainties around knowledge, and the emotions we experience as thinkers. I also fear we are looking to solutions proposed in Research 1 contexts and applying them to other institutions with different populations in ways that may be causing harm; for example, just because teaching for transfer (TFT) worked at Florida State University does not mean it will work at my institution in the CUNY system. These movements, in my view, ignore the vine in the air-conditioning vent. I wonder: What are our institutions of higher learning running towards and whom are we leaving behind? How are our first-year writing curriculums and learning outcomes affected

by these discourses of momentum? What are the consequences for students, particularly those who attend public colleges and universities?

In class writings and in conversations, the material realities of the students at my CUNY college come to the fore. One student tells me she must move out of her apartment this month because they raised the rent by \$100, a price increase she cannot afford working two part-time jobs. Another explains he is the primary caretaker of his younger sister and has trouble getting to class because he needs to see her off to school first. A mother of two debates whether she should continue her undergraduate studies or work full time when faced with her husband's recent layoff. A single mother was forced to move out of her boyfriend's apartment and is now living on her friend's living-room couch. And the stories continue to be told every semester. I remember Rich's question: Do these students "stay on with gritted teeth?" (1980, 61). I think about how the material conditions of my students' lives lead to real conflicts and challenges to learning and to completing their degrees on time. The charts I am being shown about graduation rates do not reflect these stories. These plans for eliminating remedial classes and encouraging our CUNY students to take thirty credits a semester do not account for the realities of our majority working-class, minority, and first-generation student population. Asking students to come in and be ready to conceptualize a theory around writing practice also seems to ignore where these students are at academically. These policies and disciplinary-writing curriculums favor students who can prioritize school as a full-time job and those who already have a history of academic success and preparation.

In this chapter, I hope to show how the "managerial unconscious" of composition (Strickland 2011)—or our intense focus on professionalization and marketing the usefulness of writing for capitalist production—is a detriment to the practice of rhetoric. Furthermore, pedagogical practices that stem from this ideology kowtow to the needs of the corporate university rather than nurturing students as authors of their stories for their future roles in community. Focusing writing curriculum on disciplinary knowledge(s) may further alienate working-class writers and their experiences outside the university.

## TRANSFORMING ETHOS

Before I unpack some of the contemporary terminology of the field, terminology I feel stems from this rhetoric of professionalization—like *rhetorical awareness*, *threshold concepts*, and *transfer*—I want to pause here in this section to define and review the importance of ethos to our

modern field. When our field loses its specific language—vocabulary and etymology—of rhetorical terms such as *ethos*, we lose our ability to talk about rhetoric and to practice it. The loss of words and their meaning is a detriment to literacy, specifically literacy about place and materiality, as Robert MacFarlane (2016) claims in his book *Landmarks*. His project of recovering words about natural phenomena in glossary form reminds us how terms hold “word magic” and provide the possibility for “re-wonderment” as “language does not just register experience, it produces it. The contours and colours of words are inseparable from the feelings we create in relation to situations, to others and to places” (26). In relation to the field of writing studies, the language loss of ethos—its full range of meaning and its place in the rhetorical tradition—leaves us with a hollow field of study.

How do we inspire re-wonderment around literacy practice? I don’t much think I have the secret answer to this question; however, I want to believe the content of this book—both theoretical and practical—illuminates another path for the field, one based on rhetoric that has a more ecological approach, considering place and material realities. The book recovers *ethos* as a key term of rhetorical practice, as this appeal is essential in communicating lived experience as a form of knowledge, returning to a kind of narrative epistemology. The sharing of life stories in writing, though a vulnerable undertaking, is one that can lead to subject development and transformation (of both writer and reader) and further allow for the potentiality for identification(s) with others.

Because I worked with Theresa Enos, I would say I am a student of the New Rhetoric. I remember her walking up to the board in seminar, her sequined heels clacking on the linoleum floor, and writing a formula on the board,  $Rh=Life$ . She explained to us that this equation meant we had to work from the world, from our lives, to build rhetorical theory. Rhetoric was something beyond the act of persuasion and the truth; it was beyond certainty and display; it was about getting at that ever-elusive idea of what it means to be “present,” to represent ourselves with others. I learned from her and other scholars that the study of the word and of actions is a revealing of the “intertwining” relationships among “invention, voice, and ethos.” I learned that we are continually creating ourselves and emerging through our discourses. Expressing selves, making lived experience and reflection visible for readers, is important because it is one way to create identification(s). Rhetoric is a way we “construct ourselves among others,” so it is imperative that we teach how to use language in ethical ways (Enos 2013, 5).

Ethos, as defined by Enos (1994), is developed through style and voice of the writer; this voice acts as a vehicle for dialogic experience between reader and writer—in this way, ethos is connected to rhetoric’s cannon of delivery (189). Using Jim Corder’s writing style as case study, she shows us how a writer, through stylistic choice, can work to appeal to a reader and speak with them. She goes on to qualify how ethos can be transforming when “we see, and share, the process of transformation taking place” (186). The process of writing with the ethos appeal in mind can leave the door open to surprise and transformation.

The way writing studies defines *ethos* influences how the term is used in scholarship and teaching. If we only offer a facile definition, such as *ethos* = character of the speaker, if we try to quantify this appeal for fast consumption, the term’s usage is compromised and thus loses its power and specificity. Rather, we should pay attention to how scholars have discussed ethos as an author’s ability to create inviting discourse through style,<sup>4</sup> as Enos argues, and how others have thought about ethos in relation to democratic discourse, discussing how character development is essential to right thinking and action, as John Duffy, John Gallagher, and Steve Holmes (2018) and others have done.<sup>5</sup> We should also—as I am arguing in this book—pay attention to ethos’s connection to habitual behavior and the practice of everyday life with others in places and with things.<sup>6</sup> Transforming ethos is expression of (1) character as lived experience (ethics), (2) character as expressed in text (voice), and (3) character as expressed in the material (place and objects); we’ve tended to downplay the material aspect of this triad, so this book highlights that the most.

My book project further develops the case for a theory of ethos that is communal, connected explicitly to the material and the geographic.<sup>7</sup> Ethos is not only stylistic or related to development of the voice of the writer, it is also about narrative epistemology, focusing on how our surroundings (material, natural, cultural) construct and inform a living ethos. Nedra Reynolds (2004), in the last chapter of *Geographies of Writing*, titled “Learning How to Dwell,” calls for scholars to develop a richer understanding of embodied practices in place and how the classical concept of ethos helps us in this investigation. Reynolds “invites us to revisit the connections between habits and places, between memories and places, between our bodies and the material world” (141). My central argument is that when writers tell of their experiences with objects and places, they create and reveal the ethos appeal, and this type of personal writing is central to identification across difference. Writing self(ves) is a way to transform both yourself and your audience through

dialogic experience. This identification between reader and writer is an essential form of communication with ethical possibility. Rhetoric without communion is a hollow shell. Education should be transformative, not just transactional.

For the purpose of this book, I forward a definition of transforming ethos that is connected to physical place, that highlights the community and the cultural practices we perform in places. Scholars and teachers must place emphasis on a rhetoric with ethos at its center, one that frames its practice as a form of dwelling—as a guidebook on how to live (with others). Responding to institutional pressures for successful outcomes, recent trends in composition studies have shifted the definition of rhetoric and its practice by focusing first-year pedagogies on academic preparation and workplace performance. These approaches, however, have led to a rhetoric centered on professionalism rather than on ethics, learning to be and think with others. Rhetoric needs its heart. We must bring forward an embodied and emplaced definition of ethos to inspire a kind of reWonderment around literacy practices.

#### I THOUGHT I WAS ON THE GRAVY TRAIN

As someone who went through college at public institutions on merit-based awards that covered my tuition, I desired to work to increase access for students in the ways I had experienced it myself. I believed education was a meal ticket, but also something more. I desired to give back. I saw how my journey in higher education was more difficult for me than for some of my peers and yet in many ways so much easier than for others, particularly the students I teach today. This story of access through open admissions at CUNY was the history of the field of rhetoric and composition I clung to, believing in the imperative to educate for social justice and economic uplift. Like Steve Parks (2010), I thought I was riding the gravy train. With my graduate school learning, I saw a legacy of scholars behind me in the writings of Mina Shaughnessy, Sondra Perl, and Ira Shor. As I became a professor and read further into the history of CUNY open admissions, I learned about the activist poets and writers—such as Aijaz Ahmad, Toni Cade Bombara, Barbara Christian, David Henderson, Addison Gayle, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, Raymond Patterson, and Adrienne Rich—who worked for the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) program in its early inception and the ways they advocated for a praxis that “created a space for experimental collaboration—a localized, liberatory, pedagogical process” (Reed 2013, 38) that particularly aimed to serve the program’s

Black and Latinx populations.<sup>8</sup> The discourse of access today, however, is all about momentum and academic discourse and less about the material realities of class and race consciousness.

The lofty goals and narratives surrounding increased access—at CUNY and elsewhere—sometimes ring false. I’m left feeling a great disjunction between my original intention for signing up for graduate school in writing studies and the realities of my position as a tenure-track writing-faculty member. I think about the ways I have reaped benefits from a system that favors some identities over others. I think about my white, female body<sup>9</sup> as I stand in front of the classroom and in meetings; I think about the power I have as a WPA over nontenured faculty; I think about how I don’t offer a form of representation for my students who are nonwhite, which is the majority. I don’t think these disjunctions are something I experience singly; rather, this is a collective weight and responsibility many of us in the field shoulder—especially those who have identities with more privilege. To not speak out and admit that privilege is to be complicit in it.

Furthermore, my concerns about discourses of efficiency and transfer don’t just apply to the CUNY system but extend into higher education and the administration of writing programs in particular. Writing programs, particularly our curriculum design, cannot help but be influenced by these discourses of efficiency. The focus on the material realities of students and communities that surround our schools is often masked by the need to produce measurable outcomes that point to student success. The numbers and charts I mentioned earlier that support CUNY’s thirty-credit freshmen experience are “diverting attention from the contextual variables” (e.g., working-class/minority lives) and thus only focusing on results that can be easily quantified and shown to be successful. These data support the justification of the university’s (and by extension, the writing program’s) existence to the academic bureaucracy and others, providing “public accountability, strategic planning, and the identification of ‘programs of excellence’”—all the things that assist in gaining institutional accreditation and funding of programs and projects (Gallagher 2012, 46).

To cast this story about the privileging of outcomes and efficiency as a new movement in academia is an act of purposeful amnesia. The CUNY open-access legacy, and the scholarship and ideas writers have brought forth about and from this context, runs parallel to what Donna Strickland (2011) in her history of the field describes as the “managerial unconscious” of composition studies. She discusses how the field emerged from a division of labor in English departments. This division

was one of actual thought and also ran along gendered lines, as literature was “associated with ‘creative,’ productive work,” and thus the majority of its teachers were men, while composition—a field dominated by women—became “associated with ‘mechanical,’ reproductive work” (44). This origin of our field, and its attendant second-class nature within English departments, led scholars at the time to be concerned about developing a discourse of conceptual, academic work around writing studies—and this discourse, Strickland details, emerged from the development of our professional organizations (CCCC and WPA), graduate programs in rhetoric and composition, and journals. This move to professionalize composition, however, led to the development of a professional class, WPAs and other PhDs, who manage writing programs and create and enforce curriculum and policy; as Strickland explains, professionalization “enfranchise[d] those involved in the administration of composition more than it has enfranchised the vast majority of teachers of composition,” and, I would add, our students (54).

To continue this line of thinking, I want to analyze three particular discursive sites in our modern field that reveal a focus on outcomes and professionalization, and, at the same time, the absence of rhetorical concerns and vocabulary beyond the “rhetorical situation” of transfer in the university. These are the WPA Outcomes Statement (Council of Writing Program Administrators 2019), *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies* (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015) and its attendant theory of threshold concepts, and *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing* (Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak 2015) and its attendant curricular application teaching for transfer (TFT). I think a closer analysis of these texts reveals an emphasis in value and a new professionalizing rhetoric for writing studies.

The movement of writing as a skill for professionalization is most evident in the approval and dissemination of the WPA Outcomes Statement and its updated versions. This is the document we point to for justification of our curriculum development and goals, and the one we often use to defend our writing programs from administrative oversight. It is a document by which we guide new scholars in our field and also one we use in the professional development of adjuncts. In other words, it’s a foundational text that represents who we are (or want to be); yet I think many of us feel an aversion to its framing and language—particularly in how it defines rhetoric. For example, Peter Elbow (2005) reacted to its first release in “A Friendly Challenge to Push the Outcomes Statement Further,” expressing unease with what the statement omits. What is absent is important because it shows what

ideas are being suppressed. Elbow responded, “Insofar as the Outcomes Statement treats invention at all (and it mostly doesn’t), it treats it more as a matter of finding and responding to material in readings. I see no awareness in the root ability to find thoughts and topics of your own—to write as an initiator and agent rather than as a respondent” (179–80). To cast writers in the role of respondents to other texts (voices) is to limit their potential for self-knowledge and transformation and for using their voices as a way of communicating with others. It also casts rhetorical invention as a process that comes only as a response, not as an act of creation. Furthermore, “Rhetorical Awareness”—as it’s outlined in the Outcomes Statement—emphasizes that students must be good practitioners of discourses for academic contexts. Students are cast in the limited role of responders to academic texts. When we look closely at the wording of the WPA Outcomes Statement, for example, we see how rhetoric is framed as a mere set of strategies to employ in writing—“negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions” for the purpose of achieving personal advancement in disciplinary fields and eventually in the workplace (Council of Writing Program Administrators 2019). The WPA Outcomes Statement, to this end, puts forward three goals for the acquisition and use of “rhetorical knowledge” in first-year writing: students will learn

- the expectations of readers in their fields
- the main features of genres in their fields
- the main purposes of composing in their fields

The repetition of “in their fields” hits home the idea that the WPA Outcomes Statement casts the applications for the study of rhetoric in only a narrow way—as a tool for professionalization.

The professional movement is not just found in one of the field’s defining documents but also in texts we’ve centered curriculum development on for both graduate students and FYW. For example, the book *Naming What We Know*, which is used in many graduate and undergraduate courses in composition theory and now has a sequel because of its success (2019), frames for audiences a too-neat kind of “consensus” among practitioners as they identify the tenets of the field in digestible mantras, or what the book’s authors call “threshold concepts” (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015, 5). Though the book includes a few nods to rhetoric as a social practice (Roozen 2015, 17–19), rhetoric as an ethical practice (Duffy 2015, 31), and rhetoric as inherently ideological (Bazerman and Tinberg 2015, 61), it is overall too myopic, framing rhetoric as a *discipline*, not as a way of dwelling, not as a way of life. Its

many sections focus on the cognitive and reflective dimensions of writing as far as these can be used to help students become effective writers for the purpose of advancement in their college careers. Also, the second part of the book talks about how to base curricula around the threshold concepts theory, one section particularly on first-year-writing (FYW) curriculum. The book, like the WPA Outcomes Statement, reeks of professionalization.

*Writing across Contexts* and its spin-off curriculum are part of the movement of professionalization in composition studies at the level of implementing TFT (teaching for transfer) in the FYW curriculum. The reader is placed in an ideological framework that supports the notion that FYW “help[s] students develop writing knowledges and practices that they can draw upon, use, and repurpose for new writing tasks in new settings” (Yancey, Roberts, and Taczak 2015, 2). Students, it is argued, need to learn how to write about writing, how to theorize the process of writing—only then, its authors argue, can students learn to meaningfully transfer writing across contexts. This idea, on the surface, looks to be one that would create writers that respond to the rhetorical situation, but the book and its curriculum only measure writing transfer in a narrow setting, that of future university writing tasks beyond FYW. The fact that this pedagogical approach was born of an R1 institution and has been adopted wholesale across different contexts (like community colleges) is further cause for concern, as the assumption is that all these contexts are magically the same, normalized under the R1 banner of excellence.

Furthermore, *transfer*, as a key term, presupposes that the only writing that “counts” is writing in the university. An “expressivist” class is discussed in the study (Yancey, Roberts, and Taczak 2015, 77–82), and the authors found that the writing done in that class didn’t transfer to the other writing done in the university—and, to be honest, I’m not surprised that was the conclusion. My question is, did the writings in this expressivist class transfer to other contexts, to students’ lives outside the university? Did the writing and thinking done in that class transform the writers, in that it allowed them to see themselves in a new way and to communicate to others in a new way? We don’t know. These questions, though, are important. They are questions of character development because they involve different places and times beyond the walls of the university.

As a professional in the field reviewing this body of scholarship, and as someone who serves an administrative function in my writing program, I feel caught between the overarching narrative of the managerial

unconscious and the other alternative, progressive histories of composition I was exposed to as a graduate student (Parks 2011; Rice 2007; Sirc 2002). I remember furiously reading Geoffrey Sirc's (2002) *Composition as a Happening*, inspired by the early practitioners of the discipline of writing studies who, in a way, brought the funk, creating classroom spaces that "allow[ed] the inhabitants a sense of the sublime, making it a space no one wants to leave, a *happening* space" (1). And, in some ways, I think I'm trying to bring the funk to my classroom, but once we all leave that space, well, the rest of the university is pretty tacky-tacky at best. I am torn—many days I believe in my work as an administrator and a writing teacher and that I help students move forward to become better writers and potentially better leaders and critical citizens. There's a feeling of hope for a chance at advancement. But some days, I have this sinking feeling that I am upholding an institutional hierarchy in which I play a role as a middle manager and that I am championing, or at least complicit with, a system that perpetuates racial and class inequality through its focus on success and efficiency. Throughout academia now, higher administrators are calling on writing programs to kowtow to the needs of business rather than to the needs of community. Certainly, I am not the only one who feels a bit jaded in my professional role.

My professional title actually reads: Rosanne, the Accidental WPA. Yet, I read scholarship like the edited collection, *GenAdmin*, and I find some colleagues who "came to see administration as a core component of their professional and intellectual identities, and who pursued or accepted administrative roles before tenure to satisfy personal or professional needs" (Charlton et al. 2011, xi). The WPA generation, of which I am a part given my time in graduate school and my role as an untenured WPA, is the result of the barreling agenda of professionalization in the field. In fact, some graduate programs are producing a type of scholar-teacher that may only have a surface knowledge of the practice of rhetoric and its theories (re: ethos = character); rather, these new scholars are well versed in assessment practices and measures and quantitative methodologies. Yet I argue that the latter form of generating knowledge needs the former type of theoretical frame to inspire critical thinking about the results of such pedagogical and programmatic studies, and both ways of knowing must be emphasized in graduate work in the field. Sometimes I fear we overspecialize on the graduate level and create a false schism between the people who run writing programs and the people who do the rhetorical theorizing. I'm grateful in many ways to be working only with students at the MA level, which affords me distance from preparing grads for an oversaturated and ever-shrinking

academic job market; however, I know many of my readers must feel pressure to place PhD graduates. There is a temptation to fast track grad students into WPA roles, but do we really want young colleagues to take up administrative roles before tenure? Is the professionalization agenda even good for our junior colleagues? How does perpetuating a schism between rhetorical theory and WPA administration affect the running of writing programs?

This isn't a critique of WPAs (as I said, I am one—accidental or not). I'm also not saying the role is one that always already attracts scholars who are, or become, obsessed with success and outcomes at all costs. Some of the very best WPAs have worked for the rights of contingent faculty and students. Some WPAs do amazing jobs of creating community and professional-development opportunities for the people they serve. Some WPAs have advocated for expanded curriculums with community concerns at the center. The truth is that many of us in the field serve in administrative roles, so administrative work is not just something we can push aside given the nature of our field. It's something we must approach thoughtfully, using our skills as students of rhetoric and our knowledge of best practices for teaching writing.

I do think the members of *GenAdmin* have, for various reasons—mostly due to institutional pressures—adopted an intense focus on assessment and learning outcomes for writing studies that creates a disciplinary rhetoric centered on professionalism, with *transfer* as its key term. It is important, as a WPA, to ensure a curriculum that is more unified across sections to show a “first-year experience” and to justify that what we are doing in FYW will impact students positively as they write in their advanced classes; transfer pedagogies allow us to make these claims, by and large.

When I was first writing this chapter, I was honestly doubtful of the connections I was developing in my head among our emergent “disciplinarity,” the emphasis on *GenAdmin*, and the pedagogical movements that advocate for the professionalization of FYW—and by this, I mean FYW as having disciplinary content (i.e., TFT, WAW, and TC). However, the edited collection *Composition, Rhetoric, and Disciplinarity* (Malencyk et al. 2018) contains several articles that bridge these ideas as well. I particularly want to focus on Leanne Roberts and Kara Taczak's (2018) contribution, “Disciplinarity and First-Year Composition,” which argues that we cannot become a full-fledged discipline until the content of our introductory course aligns and has a singular purpose: transfer (198). They argue that the field is “un-disciplined” because we allow for several pedagogical approaches in FYW curricula, and our lack of unity makes our colleagues in other disciplines perceive our discipline as less serious

than theirs (192). We are ignoring, they claim, very important and defensible research on transfer and putting “values” over what is proven to be true empirically—that transfer pedagogies work in developing more rhetorically savvy and competent writers.

I see this research as rooting out all the vines, and I’m not going to lie that this sometimes totally appeals to me. Some days, I definitely do not want to be “un-disciplined.” There are negative consequences for being “un-disciplined.” I want a body of research to defend what I know about good writing and its practice. I want to believe in this idea that we can produce amazing writers who can know how to respond to all the writing situations within our university walls. I want to believe what transfer research is arguing. I want to prescribe to something that tells me to believe in the results of hard research with charts and graphs and a reproducible methodology. But, inevitably, there is a small voice in me that says “Wait.” I think this voice is there because of my training in rhetoric, and I don’t wish to silence it. “Wait.” Wait; is this research really applicable to all learning contexts? Wait; is quantitative work even the best methodology for writing studies? Wait; what are the consequences of adopting a transfer curriculum at my university, and others like mine, where the majority of students are struggling writers from working-class and minority backgrounds? I can’t run toward this new paradigm because I’m unsure I want to leave where we’ve been as a field.

The “old values” Roberts and Taczak (2018) are asking us to put aside, I believe, are those associated with narrative and story, the qualitative side of life that dares to enter the university and our writing and writing process. The “old values,” maybe we can call them *exhausted topoi*, are “writing is a practice, is individual in expression, is learned by doing, and is inclusive” (198). I have trouble putting these values to rest, and I hope others in the field feel the same way. The heart of the trouble with transfer pedagogies, to me, is their conception of rhetorical invention—all the possibilities for writing and expression available to students. In the transfer frame, rhetorical invention must be limited by the demands of disciplinary genres; these have important contexts, purposes, and audiences all their own. So, a kind of rhetoric is central to transfer, but rhetoric is only applied in a certain way because the other, older values of rhetoric, like individual expression—maybe we can even extrapolate this term to mean voice or ethos—no longer fit within the transfer-writing schema. More accurately, the voice we want students to learn is that of an expert in their discipline (Yancey 2018, 25), not the voice that speaks about their material conditions or their struggles that derive from class, race, or other identity markers. Transfer does, most certainly, value rhetoric

and principles of invention; however, the important thing to hold on to is that transfer is just one terministic screen through which to understand the practice of rhetoric, and it happens to be the one we've decided to hold up as valuable today. Transfer is, as Kathleen Blake Yancey (2018) describes, part of a new turn toward "disciplinarity" (18), and, like most of our "turns" in the field, I think it merits a critique.

To channel a *Queer Eye* reference here, transfer pedagogies are like the French Tuck of men's fashion—super in, super sexy—but are people still going to be dressing that way in fifteen years? Is this the best way for everyone to dress/write? Is the transfer movement going to go the way of, for example, 70s and 80s cognitive talk-aloud protocols?<sup>10</sup> A more lasting staple for writing studies, like a good pair of black pumps, is to show how the connections among ethos, materiality, and place are powerful instruments for writing and its teaching—an anchor that insists on the relational and multimodal aspects of writing and makes prominent its inherent ethical considerations and possibilities.

Our field has cozied up to the idea of transfer, basking in the warm glow of one form of disciplinarity and rhetoric and thus defining a purpose for writing studies in the first-year experience to ourselves and our higher administrations—that purpose being its disciplinary content: writing about writing, proclaiming what we know, and writing as a means to learn in other disciplines. At this point, it is hard not to agree with Ann Larson's (2016) proclamation that "Composition's Dead"—or at least on life support. Larson explains that we have focused on our disciplinarity as a way of advancing an elite group of scholars to tenure-track and tenured positions, but we have not done much in the way of improving working conditions for nontenured faculty (166–69); the next step in the chain of logic, I think, is that we have advanced a form of disciplinarity to the detriment of our students, arguing for a way of teaching writing that casts writing as merely a tool for disciplinary advancement and later professionalization.

We should be careful how we frame and teach rhetoric and writing. As Adrienne Rich (1980) tells us in "Teaching Language in Open Admissions," the ability to use language is one imbued with a certain power; likening it to a weapon, she says language can reflect, criticize, rename, and create (68). Educating students, she claims, releases them into language so they can use it rather than be used by it; however, this liberatory pedagogy hangs on the idea that students are "not simply learning the jargon of an elite, fitting unexceptionably into the status quo, but learning that language can be used as a means of changing reality" (67). Rich, of course, means a reality in which justice is central. As a

field, I think we've replaced the idea of language as a way to liberatory justice and instead see disciplinarity as the way to teach a professional rhetoric.<sup>11</sup> If we are indeed teaching a rhetoric of disciplinarity, our rhetoric becomes entrenched in the institutions where we teach, which many in the field have reminded us reflects a privileging of standard English, whiteness, middle classness, maleness.<sup>12</sup> As Carmen Kynard (2013) argues, the context of literacy learning has a "white center," and the field has not done enough to interrogate "deep political and ideological shifts that have left structured inequalities and violence firmly in place" (64). For example, disciplinary rhetorics, and a focus on professional genres in particular, could further the ideology of code-switching, enforcing a kind of segregation that upholds racial superiority, as Vershawn Young (2009) describes in his article, "'Nah, We Straight': An Argument Against Code-Switching" (51), an argument also reiterated by writers in his edited collection on code-meshing (2018). Fast forward a few years since this influential article to his call for papers for the 2019 CCCC. The debate that ensued on WPA-L after the release of the call was an unmasking of the façade of "acceptance" of student home languages.<sup>13</sup> Rather than being inspired by Young's call to performance, many of our field's practitioners quibbled over whether his use of African American Vernacular (AAV) was appropriate for the call—because CFPs, after all, are a particular genre with its own conventions and no deviation in language or creativity need appear. We continue to experience strife on this professional listserv today with the posting of overt hate speech. When I consider the graduate students coming up in our ranks, particularly those students of color, I feel the field must do more to invite them in. When we agree that the work of composition is teaching the disciplinary knowledge of writing for students to transfer to other disciplines, we may be opening a Pandora's Box that spews out white supremacist, violent rhetorics<sup>14</sup> I think many people in the field do want to stand against.

I keep hearing Audre Lorde's (1984) warning that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (112); though this phrase appears in a speech she delivered to a group of feminists to remind them to be more intersectional in their movement and to include the voices and experiences of women of color, it is a warning that fits all contexts where language and pedagogy are being wielded to maintain normativity. As Lorde explains, it is only with deliberate inclusion and acknowledgment of differences that we can build "a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic." She continues to explain how this creative energy, the dialectic of difference, values an interdependency that can lead to a state of "power" that shows us "new

ways of being in the world” (111), ways not connected to the patriarchy and the master’s tools. If our pedagogies work to uphold a disciplinary discourse that reflects back to us whiteness, middle classness, and maleness, we strike down difference and potentially eliminate it. Pedagogies that value difference, such as those based in narrative epistemologies or those with an investment in code-meshing and translanguaging, give us some hope for making a world—or at least classrooms—in which we can all flourish.

Considering the narrative about higher education and rhetoric and composition I’ve sketched out in this chapter, I now look to my own student demographic at the College of Staten Island CUNY. We accept 98 percent of those who apply to our school, and our population is made up of about 53 percent nonwhite students (the citywide average for CUNY is 80 percent), many of whom are the first in their families to attend college. Also, according to data provided by CUNY Central as part of a grant for moving to Open Educational Resources (OER), “Nearly forty percent of CUNY’s students come from households with annual incomes of less than \$20,000, spending an average of \$1,200 per year on books and other supplies is too often an insurmountable barrier to academic success.” (“Open Educational Resources”). Given the student demographics of the system where I teach, I become very uneasy championing the discourses of disciplinarity and transfer and the rhetorics of efficiency.

I desire a different way forward, a new rhetoric for writing studies, which, admittedly, might have some of the vestiges of the old rhetoric from the 60s and 70s. These questions underlie my concerns and are the impetus for writing this book: How can we define the work of writing studies to others without relying only on a positivist ideology? Can we think of more creative ways, breaking free of the transfer discourses, to administer writing programs and to develop curriculum? And, even more important, can we think of ways to engage local and material realities in our work? Can we look to the work happening in universities that serve working-class students as models for practice?

#### **A NEW RHETORIC FOR WRITING TEACHERS<sup>15</sup>**

I came to the study of rhetoric because it offers a way to talk about language as inherently ideological and because it reveals the ways society is stratified and the inequalities we experience (or don’t) because of this.

Theresa used to say often, “I don’t mind being retro.” Sometimes, we have to step back to move forward. In many ways, I think we skipped over some important movements that could be at the center for writing

studies—I hope to show that one of them is the focus on place-based and material writing through the study of ethos.

I see this book as a clarion call for a way to structure composition studies around ethos-constructive practice, ethos as a way to think about curriculum design, to engage student stories and experiences, and to discuss and write about socially and ecologically relevant topics. Similar to Derek Owens (2001) in *Composition and Sustainability*, I am reacting to “faculty members and administrators [who] are obsessed with various assessment mechanisms,” and I am earnestly calling for us to “confront our collective failure as educators in building a sustainable culture” (34). Owens’s book offers a framework for a curriculum centered on the idea of sustainability, arguing that first-year writing is ripe for developing “sustainably-conscious thinking” (7). His book lays out a way for educators to incorporate place-based writing, work reflections, and analyses of current and future social issues into the composition classroom. He excerpts several student reflections as well that show us the kinds of writing and ideas his students produced throughout the semester. The fact that *sustainability* has not become as much of a key term for our field as *transfer* is all the worse for us.

Nedra Reynolds’s (2004) book *Geographies of Writing* also offers our field a way to talk about and write about place, and it sets out a transformative vision for the field as she highlights how the study of place reveals social inequalities. In her last chapter, titled “Learning How to Dwell,” she calls for scholars to develop a richer understanding of embodied practices in place. She mentions how the classical concept of ethos helps us in this investigation and “invites us to revisit the connections between habits and places, between memories and places, between our bodies and the material world” (141). This work of being in place and taking note of our relationship to it and to others is an important part of studying rhetoric—ethos is the substance of rhetoric because it provides an ethical center.<sup>16</sup> When we investigate place and the material, we are at a starting point for “understanding difference, otherness, and the politics of exclusion,” and this understanding allows our writing to advocate for “critical literacy, social justice, and liberatory education” (3). In general, when students are led to think about their embodied performances in place through considering their own identity markers alongside others who share the space (and their attendant identities), they form a critical literacy and a way for understanding and working through difference. In other words, ethos brings to the fore issues of inequality in our society and can make students aware of how to write about those issues and advocate for themselves and others.

A more recent study of ethos and calls for its return in the discipline are found in the edited collection *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric* (Ryan, Meyers, and Jones 2016). In the introduction, the editors show how ethos is related to ecology and ways of being in the world, separate from the Aristotelian notion of it as only related to “character” or “credibility,” and further talk about how studying ethos through a feminist lens brings to light “new ways for interrelationality, materiality, and agency” (viii). The collection is organized by three guiding principles for how a feminist ethos can work as an appeal that allows for interruption (of the dominant discourse/hegemony), advocating for others, and relating to others. I’d like to focus specifically on Stacey Waite’s (2016) chapter in the interruption section as she reminds us that ethos isn’t about communicating an essential self but rather must focus on “location, positionality, and dwelling” as key terms (72). The relation of ethos to place, time, and being allows us to think about how rhetoric circulates and the ways we can work to interrupt dominant discourses that divide or exclude. In the case of *Transforming Ethos*, I am forwarding the need to begin to disrupt dominant discourses of our field (i.e., transfer) and on a national level (i.e., efficiency). Ethos, like the self, isn’t fixed but rather something we construct provisionally with others and with places and things. As Waite reminds us, queering the term *ethos* takes us out of the fixed sense of identity and allows rhetoricians to “as Emily Dickenson might put it, ‘dwell in possibility,’ to see not only from our own limited positionalities, but to see from elsewhere, to cultivate the ability to imagine elsewhere or otherwise. A queer ethos can interrupt normative ways of looking” (72). This imaginative leap rhetoric can foster, the “being elsewhere or otherwise,” is a kind of future-making, one that can be transformative for the speaker and listener—I focus on this idea extensively in chapter 1. Thinking about recovering ethos for the field, I’d like to position the discussion less around an Aristotelian notion of fixity in the binds of credibility and character and more around seeing the formation of the appeal as a relational and multimodal (e.g., encompassing people, places, and things) process that creates ethical possibilities. In this sense, chapter 1 of this book searches for a transformative definition of ethos that can throw open the constraints of space and time to allow for a “being elsewhere and otherwise” and tries to sort out how we can apply this definition to our theory and our pedagogy.

Because this book relies on the idea of dynamic character, of transformative ethos, of tracing ideas rather than announcing certainty and conclusions, I experiment here with form and voice, balancing

the theoretical with the personal. In this book, I share parts of my identity and reveal the moments in places and with things I believe are important to its construction. This “interruptive” narrative writing is in the service of the theories about ethos and identification I am working to develop. I am inspired by the writings of Corder; I believe his scholarly oeuvre is timely, as his personal, performative style challenges paradigms of objectivity and cognition, embracing the emotional and the uncanny. Further, Corder theorizes ethos beyond style as he values the personal (his sacred objects and places in West Texas and working-class background); he believes communicating these facets of identity is ethos.

When Theresa introduced me to his work, Corder’s voice and writing appealed to me because, moving from Connecticut to Arizona for graduate school, I felt the same kinds of displacement from my own geography, and my Italian American heritage, that he describes in relation to West Texas. I had finished my undergraduate degree, I was twenty-two, and I put this naïve faith in the idea that things would work out for me if I just worked hard enough. I remember a mentor from my undergrad program advising me to go to graduate school far away because, in the logic of the academic job market, “You’re more likely to be able to return to the East Coast if you go out to Arizona.”

I was the first person in my immediate family to go on to graduate school—and the first woman to earn a BA—so there was definitely this culture shock.<sup>17</sup> I felt I had to assimilate, to learn different ways to present myself, dress, and speak. These lessons weren’t easy. For example, I remember before I took my comprehensive orals, one of my professors told me in a private conference that my written exams were spot-on but if I really wanted to do well, if I really wanted to earn distinction, I had to learn to articulate myself without using sentence fillers: “like,” “um,” “yeah,” and “you know.” I had to be more assertive in stating my arguments. This was definitely something, he said, that I needed to learn before I went on the job market. People wouldn’t “take me seriously” in academia if I kept these speech patterns; patterns that are linguistic markers of my generation, my legible gender, and my ethnic and class identity. I have no resentment, though the experience was painful—he was offering me his insight into how academia functions. I worked on my speech like Eliza frickin’ Doolittle, “The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain,” but I definitely wasn’t singing, or happy about it. I earned distinction on my comprehensives. I have contradictory feelings about memories like these, about my own advancement in the academy. I think many of us do. My story, given my positionality, does not even skim

the surface in representing the ways people of color have felt harmed by the academy.

Academia—by its nature—forces many students to feel displaced, as they are often taught to adjust behaviors, speech patterns, and ways of being. Even more, students sometimes must move to other locations, sometimes hours or days away from those they love, for the promise of the job ahead, if it ever comes, or to be ready to pick up when the job offer(s) arrive. This root shock is heightened when we consider the dimensions of class and race and the way academia demands assimilation into a white, upper-middle-class habitus. Harm is further perpetuated when we consider forms of linguistic oppression that privilege Mainstream American English and create racist attitudes of anti-Blackness (Baker-Bell 2020). Academia is classist and racist, and by extension, so is our writing pedagogy and assessment.<sup>18</sup>

The stakes get higher and higher, the displacement greater, as students advance further into this academic life. Our FYW students certainly experience this shock when they come to us—even more so when they come from working-class and/or minority backgrounds, when they deviate far from that white, upper-middle-class habitus. It's not just about working hard enough—the game is rigged.

By some talent and hard work, by finding a mentor and friend in Theresa, by a lot of luck, and because—I'm sure—of my white ethnic identity, things did work out for me in academia. I ultimately got a tenure-track job on the East Coast; I got to return to my family and friends. That kind of outcome was and is not open to a lot of my peers. I made genuine friendships in graduate school, found a love and appreciation for the Southwest, became more independent, and earned a credential and now a salary that allows me to be middle class. Yet there's also all this lost time, these lost moments with my elderly relatives who died while I was in Arizona or shortly after I returned, and also this loss of an earlier self I ache for even though—you know—I'm not her anymore.

When we deal with loss, with death, and with displacement, we have to keep finding threads to piece ourselves together in a different way in order to move forward. We must write from a subjectivity that is fragmented and unfolding—as Corder did—as I do in these pages ahead. As Restaino (2019) asks in her book *Surrender*, “How might we render our writerly subjectivity in ways that *surrender* its palatability or wholeness?” (132).

When we write from a place of memory, about our places and our people and our things, when we trace the origins of our ethos, we must

reckon with a lack of wholeness and a shifting sense of subjectivity and writerly self. As Corder (2004) writes in “Varieties of Ethical Argument,” a person with an ideal ethos “lives in a space large enough to house contradictions” (79). Surrendering certainty and adopting a tentative stance are par for the course—this ethos allows for readers to inhabit our worlds, to know our multiple, contradictory selves.

Many desires drive this book—to build a material and place-driven theory of rhetoric and writing that casts ethos in a central role and pushes the field to imagine pedagogies that reflect this vision, to talk about the material conditions in city and state universities and pay attention to the realities of our students’ lives, to dive into my memories and offer an example of scholarship that reads as personal, to highlight Corder’s contributions to the field, and to memorialize my dear friend and mentor, Theresa. These desires stem from different times in my life, from different places, and are inspired by many people; they make me restless, force me to write, demand and compete for my attention. I write out of all these emotions, love being perhaps the most salient. These desires and emotions make up the very fabric of this book’s being, and they also work together to—at once—ravel and unravel, reveal and conceal my character as its author. Though we may wish for a whole and complete text, a whole and complete theory for rhetoric and writing, a whole and complete self, it seems that all we can offer is the desires, the parts of the whole. Certainty about what we are and know is a lie. All we can hope for in rhetoric—as writers and as audiences—is a willingness to work through the imperfection, to labor and love, despite the holes, contradictions, and disparities.

### READING AHEAD

The following chapters synthesize philosophy, rhetorical theory, and composition theory to clarify for readers the role of ethos and its potentiality for identification(s) and pedagogy that may illuminate a new way forward for the field. The chapter summaries below offer a more specific vision of the place-based and material applications of the ethos appeal. Furthermore, the book also contributes to our discourses in the field in the following areas: (1) identification, particularly the role ethos plays in that process, (2) multimodal applications of composition and rhetoric through engagement and composition with material objects and places, and (3) personal writing as essential to scholarly and student inquiry.

The structure of the following chapters moves the reader from high rhetorical theory to its application. The middle three chapters rely on

a theoretical framing for understanding ethos and its material and geographic applications. In these chapters, the works of theorists such as Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980) and Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (2002) are examined as case studies. The last chapter considers how we can apply place-based curricula in classroom practices and thus analyzes student examples. Though *Transforming Ethos* draws upon key philosophical and rhetorical works, its use of narratives by myself and other writers—as well as its discussion of classroom applications—makes high theory more accessible to readers.

The book intends, by its focus on the term *ethos*, to show how the appeal is essential in communicating lived experience as a form of knowledge and how the sharing of stories, though a vulnerable undertaking, is one that can lead to subject development and transformation, and further to the potentiality for identification(s) with others (readers). This idea should undergird our approach to rhetoric and curriculum design.

Chapter 1, “Finding a Transformative Definition of Ethos,” relies less on a contemporary discussion of the discipline and higher education and more on the theoretical approach I think we need to adopt to achieve these expressed goals. The goal to humanize rhetorical practice and pedagogy, I think, requires a leap into the works of theorists that focus on aesthetics and spirituality, almost the reverse of works by extreme pragmatists that focus on datasets and outcomes.

In this chapter, I argue that the ethos appeal is often misunderstood or oversimplified in contemporary usage when scholars and teachers define it solely as character expressed in a text. More important, the definition of ethos has material consequences and cultural connections. When we think about a speaker's character, we must consider their material and geographic realities and experiences as part of the development and emergence of subjectivity. Ethos, when expressed by speakers through material and geographic means, acts as a vehicle that creates an opening for a threshold, or passage, that allows for emergence of the subject among the self, others, and the material world. This chapter describes how *ethos* is a key term in Burkean identification, or the ways in which the outside becomes interior and how subjects relate to each other. In this first chapter, I explain the theoretical foundations for this theory of ethos through contemporary and ancient discourse on the term in relation to time (*kairos*), space (gathering place), and Martin Heidegger's concept of dwelling, relying on his theories on the call of language.

Chapter 2, “Finding and Collecting: Stories on Material Objects and the Ethos Appeal,” explains how the human impulse to find and collect

material objects is a practice of rhetoric, particularly related to ethos development. The chapter relies on current scholarship and ancient writings in material studies, linking texts such as Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010) and Lucretius's "De rerum natura" (2008) to forward key principles for materialist rhetoric. The chapter asks teachers and scholars to analyze narratives about material objects, construct their own, and invite students to write on theirs. The chapter uses cases studies from professional materialist writings, such as Benjamin's "Unpacking My Library" (1969), Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1980), and Corder's *Lost in West Texas* (1988).

Overall, the chapter argues that an engagement with the material—investigating our own and others' affective relationships to it—has the potential to further our understanding of rhetorical ethos and to build relationships between the self and other(s). If we can see the things that matter to others and the reasons they matter, we have a whole new way of identifying with the other. When we understand that inhabiting the world is a process others undertake through their objects, we begin to see others' values and their characters emerge, creating identification(s) through ideological, racial, and other differences. Identification doesn't necessarily require a collapse of difference, or normalization, but rather sees difference as essential to meaningful relationships with others.

Chapter 3, "Movement: The Possibilities of Place and the Ethos Appeal," argues that the continual process of getting into place is inescapably linked to rhetorical ethos. Place-making requires a continual attunement to place (see Thomas Rickert's [2013] *Ambient Rhetoric*), often achieved through movement—movement is further discussed as a rhetorical practice. Reflecting on place allows people to understand and communicate their experiences and their knowledge(s). Additionally, subject/object divisions between the self and the environment/other(s), through this lens of rhetorical place-wandering, are recognized and worked through as a process that allows for potential identification(s).

Throughout the chapter, I propose that rhetoricians and teachers of writing consider place through the Greek term *chôra* rather than *topoi* because the former term places more of an emphasis on subjectivity and emotions; it connects the idea of place to spatiality, discourse, and the body. Rather than describing love of place as *topophilia*, the chapter proposes the term *chôraphilia*, as the latter accounts more for our embodied and emotional connections to places. The chapter furthers the connection people have with place(s) through the concept of the fold, which, I argue, can occur through embodied and mental acts of wandering

through places. Writings from the scholars Corder and José Esteban Muñoz are examined as case studies for rhetorical-movement practice and for seeing place as essential to ethos development.

Chapter 4, “For an Affective, Embodied, Place-Based Writing Curriculum: Student Reflections on Gentrifying Neighborhoods in New York City,” is a practical application of the theoretical groundwork laid in 2 and 3, as it argues for an affective, embodied, place-based rhetoric in the writing classroom and offers a critique of contemporary seminal texts in rhetoric and writing studies, such as the WPA Outcomes Statement (Council of Writing Program Administrators 2014), *Writing across Contexts* (Yancey, Roberts, and Taczak 2014), and *Naming What We Know* (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2105), that diminish the role of rhetoric as an ethical practice and shift instructors away from critical pedagogies. Through its case study of a curriculum at a public university in New York City, the chapter argues that place-based writing works to instill what Ira Shor (1999) calls a “critical literacy” in students as they work through their positionality (identity) in the world and recognize this identity in relation to the communities they are a part of or live alongside. In other words, students develop an ecological perspective through place-based writing assignments. Furthermore, cultivating a heightened rhetorical awareness in students of self, place, and audience is one of the most important parts of rhetorical education because it allows them to contribute to public discourse and debates across difference.

In the place-based FWW curriculum outlined in chapter 4, the assignments encouraged students to move from personal reflection to public debate on gentrification and its effects on New York City (e.g., rising rents, displacement, business closures, and so forth). Throughout the semester, students reflected on their own experiences in NYC neighborhoods, engaged perspectives on gentrification through analyzing oral histories, wrote a researched opinion essay on a case study of economic development in Staten Island (the borough where their college is located), and, finally, created a public multimodal argument on gentrification. This place-based writing curriculum, I argue, fostered a sense of local, critical literacy, allowing—as Linda Flower (2008) asserts—for students to speak with, for, and about the community surrounding the college as they composed. In many ways, the curriculum asked students to analyze what Robert Brooke (2015) refers to as “the commonwealth” of New York City, a point of view that supports an ecological interpretation because it sees the city as “a mutually interdependent system of relations,” a system that creates “a cultural entity: a network of mutually interdependent cultural systems that work together within a particular

political entity” (28). The chapter offers a way we can and should educate students to see the social issues that come out of their places and the ways they can advocate and write about these issues. There is also an appendix with further detail as to the assignments and readings for this FYW course.

If I can venture to summarize the overarching argument in this book, it is that the ethos appeal—at once textual and beyond textual—expands space and time to create the conditions for identifications that both value and recognize diversity. I want to understand how our living—our things, our places—helps us construct and also somehow reflect our process of understanding ourselves. This work is informed by rhetorical theory, particularly seeing ethos as an appeal in classical rhetoric, its revival in the twentieth-century New Rhetoric, and its continued study as habitual and emerging in objects and places in the twenty-first century. I continue to ask how our worlds create our values and ourselves, and then further how we communicate this process to others, and then—even further—how others identify with our ways of being so they feel, as Kenneth Burke describes, “consubstantial with” us. Studying the ethos appeal is consequential to our modern discipline, as it casts rhetoric—and its teaching—as a relational and multimodal (e.g., encompassing people, places, and things) process that creates ethical possibilities.

Thinking back to the vine in the air-conditioning vent, I now admire its ability to thrive. I don’t wish to rip it out anymore. If we cut out our students’ lives, if we don’t offer occasions for writing that engage their experiences in our pedagogies, we’re ignoring their contexts and the issues that spring from them. We are not helping them respond to those issues in their own voices. We need these student voices to listen to and learn from in our public discourse, voices that will advocate for and show us a way to a better world.