UC Irvine

UC Irvine Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Appraising Our Investments in Youth: Rhetorical Education in the Age of Neoliberalism

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8846v17g

Author

Lee, Jasmine

Publication Date

2018

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, availalbe at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Appraising Our Investments in Youth: Rhetorical Education in the Age of Neoliberalism

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in English

by

Jasmine Nicole Lee

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Jonathan F. Alexander, Chair
Professor Susan C. Jarratt
Professor Daniel M. Gross
Professor Michael Szalay

2018

© 2018 Jasmine Nicole Lee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
CURRICULUM VITAE	iv
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	v
CHAPTER 1: Introduction, Appraising Our Investments in Youth: Rhetorical Education in the Age of Neoliberalism	1
CHAPTER 2: A “Satisfying” and “Profitable” Democratic Education: Life Adjustment and the Making of American Youth into Citizens	29
CHAPTER 3: Reading Between the Lines: What Culturally Engaged Composition Textbooks Can Tell Us about Youth	57
CHAPTER 4: Are They Feeling It?: Discussion Questions as Affective Guides to Dystopian YA Fiction	112
CHAPTER 5: Conclusion, Political Sensations: Toward a Critical Affect Pedagogy	159
BIBLIOGRAPHY	186

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While writing this dissertation, I have been humbled by the incredible generosity and support I have received. This project, and this degree more generally, would not have been possible without the guidance and wisdom of Professor Jonathan F. Alexander. From the very first day I appeared in his office to ask about the program, Jonathan has been in my corner. He has folded me into his professional life and helped me to build my own. Jonathan's boldness and curiosity have enriched my thinking and have given me the courage to push my inquiries in exciting and weird directions. Professor Susan C. Jarratt has been an incredible mentor and friend over the past six years. She has challenged me to be a better, slower, and more thorough scholar, while at the same time encouraging me to stand firm in my convictions, make my own path, and question everything. I will forever treasure our adventures. Professor Daniel M. Gross has always had his door open to me. He has an amazing ability to ask the right questions just when I need to hear them, and he regularly helps me retrieve some idea from my brain, even when I do not know it is hiding in there. I am deeply grateful to Professor Michael Szalay for believing that I was capable of doing interesting work way back in my first year of graduate study and for helping me learn to believe it too. Though my project has wandered from where it began in his seminars, Szalay has encouraged me to pursue what drives me, and he has stuck with me through all of it. My committee has been incredible; I take full responsibility for any shortcomings which persist in this project.

What has defined my time at UCI have been the friendships I have made here. The Rhetoric and Composition Graduate Collective, my intellectual family, has been invaluable to me. Jens, thank you for stepping up to be my graduate mentor and for becoming my academic sibling. Maureen, whatever would I have done without you? Thank you for answering all of my calls, even/especially the ones in the wee hours of the morning, and for always knowing what to say. Allison, I am so lucky to have met you. You are the best conference roommate, you are whip-smart, and I cannot wait to follow your career as it unfolds. To Lance, Abraham, Libby, Loretta, and Rachel, I am so excited to be your forever colleague. Jerry, thank you for taking me under your wing. Jennifer and Jessie, thank you for the regular check-ins. Austin, thank you for being the coolest office mate. Chris, thank you for being my buddy at the beginning. Mack, Sophie, Ryan, Harmony, Didion, Arthur—thanks for being part of my village! Thank you to all of the badass women in my department who have made me want to do better and be better every day. Everyone in the CEWC, CWC, and Composition Program—you inspire me! To the English department staff, thank you for having all of the answers. There are so many faculty members (at UCI and beyond) who I want to shout out, but whoa! If I have forgotten your name here, please know that I haven't forgotten you.

Graduate school is hard, but loving a graduate student might be just as challenging. I have no words to describe my gratitude to my family and friends for having my back throughout this totally insane undertaking; for understanding when I have been absent, forgetful, distracted, overwhelmed, or otherwise insufficient as a human being; and for supplying me with all of the love and encouragement anyone could want. To Joel and Apollo, especially: thank you for keeping me grounded and helping me to see this thing through. Thank you for reminding me what matters most every time I come home. Alexandra, I'll see you in the hall soon; can you believe it? Sarah and T, I am so glad we have each other. Fam-i-ly, this sword is for you. KBI—FINALLY. Let's celebrate!

CURRICULUM VITAE

Jasmine Nicole Lee

2008	B.A. in Literature/Writing, University of California, San Diego
2011	M.A. in English Composition (English Composition and Literature), California State University, San Bernardino
2013	M.A. in English, University of California, Irvine
2013–18	Teaching Assistant, University of California, Irvine
2014–16	Editorial Assistant, *College Composition and Communication*
2014–17	Editorial Assistant, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*
2015–17	Adjunct Faculty, Chaffey College
2016–17	Campus Writing Fellow, University of California Irvine
2018	Ph.D. in English (and Critical Theory Emphasis), University of California, Irvine

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Appraising Our Investments in Youth: Rhetorical Education in the Age of Neoliberalism

By

Jasmine Nicole Lee

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Irvine, 2018

Professor Jonathan F. Alexander, Chair

In this dissertation, I trace the figure of youth through three sites of rhetorical education since the mid-twentieth century, analyzing how our investments in youth are "always already" infused with political economic logics and values. I explore how we engage youth in our disciplinary conversations, what we rely on it to do, what it does unbeknownst to us, and how it both facilitates and limits our critical pedagogical ambitions. Through this inquiry, I intervene in ongoing discussions about how capitalism has changed and threatened the work we do in higher education by considering some of the smaller, more slippery ways that neoliberalism moves through our academic and intellectual spaces. As I track the depth and breadth of capitalism's influence in rhetorical education, I tune in to affect, a powerful pedagogical medium in the neoliberal age and, I ultimately argue, a vital and capacious creative mode through which we might locate new possibilities for rhetorical education and rhetorical agency in this moment.

CHAPTER ONE, INTRODUCTION

Appraising Our Investments in Youth: Rhetorical Education in the Age of Neoliberalism

A local news story about a young African American boy in Minnesota and his summer hot dog stand would be an unusual starting point for a dissertation. It would also be a strange story to go viral, picked up by major media outlets around the world. But nevertheless, Jaequan Faulkner, the thirteen-year-old proprietor of Mr. Faulkner's Old Fashioned Hot Dogs, made headlines this summer when someone reported his business for operating without proper permits. After officials in the city of Minneapolis helped Jaequan bring his hot dog stand up to code and paid for his permits, Jaequan's story circulated not only across the U.S. but also in the Netherlands, Brazil, and other countries.

The premise of Jaequan's experience might sound familiar, though not especially noteworthy: a young man sets forth on a new business venture, eager to make his mark and to make some money. As KARE 11, a Minneapolis NBC affiliate station, tells it, Jaequan began his business two years before, "in hopes of raising enough money to buy new school clothes" (Wingdahl). After the intervention of the Minneapolis Health Department, various economic development organizations, and a business incubator this summer, Jaequan has reimagined his goals and broadened his horizons. He is now saving up for a food cart and hoping to grow his operations. He has employees: "I pay me and my uncle and my cousin," he tells reporters, "but before I do any of that I pay tax" (Wingdahl). Readers across the globe seem to have eaten up this feel-good tale of

a young entrepreneur whose initiative and hard work were rewarded, unexpectedly, by individual actors in a municipal bureaucracy. The coverage has embraced the story's "happy" ending, treating it as a lighthearted human-interest story and thereby downplaying the precarity which underwrites it, as headlines like "A Teen, A Hot Dog Stand and a Big Dream" (Kwan), "Teen's Hot Dog Stand Serves Up Food, Inspiration with Minneapolis Inspectors' Blessing" (Bowling), and "Hot Dog! 13-Year-Old Keeps His Stand Open with Help of Minneapolis Health Department" (Shapiro) attest. Foreground: the sentimentality of the child and his summer business, the goodness of people helping him get his venture off the ground. Background: the child responsibilized for his own basic needs, the rarity of the system working for a young black boy like Jaequan.

That so many people have become invested in the tale of Jaequan and Mr. Faulkner's Old Fashioned Hot Dogs is why this otherwise banal narrative has found its way here, to the start of this dissertation. What is so compelling about this story of a precocious boy entering and finding success in the economy? Why has this story had such an impact right now? How does this story make readers—local, national, and international—feel, and why is that sensation so important right now? What can we learn about ourselves, our cultural and historical conditions, our political economic realities, our collective hopes, or our shared anxieties by paying attention to this moment? Would the story have gone viral if Jaequan were eighteen? Twenty-five? Forty? It is not only Jaequan who has captured our collective attention. Reginald Fields, a twelve-year-old African American boy in Ohio and the owner of Reggie Boyz Lawn Service, made international news earlier this summer when one of his client's neighbors called the cops on him for being on their property (Molina). A GoFundMe page set up

for Reginald exceeded its goal of $1,000 within a month; as of today, over $48,000 has been raised ("Reggie Boyz"). What is it about young people teetering on the edge of precarity that we, collectively, cannot seem to get enough of?

I would argue that youth is a driving force in the circulation of these stories[1]. Jaequan and Reginald embody many of the traits and values privileged in our cultural moment, traits and values associated with youth—innocence, ambition, entrepreneurialism, resilience. At the heart of my dissertation is an interest in defining and tracing the concept of youth—at once an educational ideal, an ideological category, and a locus of affective energies. I approach youth throughout this dissertation as a figure rather than as a demographic or biological classification. Figuring youth allows me "to unpack the domains of practice and significance that are built into" it, to study it as a "constitutive effect," and to follow its "generative circulation" (Castañeda 3). Youth, in its figurative sense, permeates our cultural imagination. When we talk about youth, we talk about the future, whether we make that connection explicitly or not. Claudia Castañeda, a feminist cultural critic, argues "that the child is an adult in the making," an "assumption so apparently self-evident that it seems almost impossible to imagine an alternative" (1). Unpacking that assumption enables us to consider the uniquely valuable cultural resource wrapped up in the child's "capacity to become" (Castañeda 1). "[I]t is critically important," Castañeda argues, "to understand and respond both to the ways in which the child … comes to accrue significant cultural value, as well as the work that it does along the way" (3). Though I take youth, and not the child, as my

[1] Certainly, race is a key component here as well. While the primary focus in this dissertation is youth, the figure circulates in different ways and does different kinds of work when one race of youth is implied versus another. While I make occasional note of these differences, there is much more work to be done in this regard.

primary figure of interest, this project responds to her call. I locate my work amidst existing scholarship like Castañeda's, work that approaches the child or the adolescent or the teenager. While I occasionally tack between these terms, I acknowledge that each term has its own history and its own domain. Each functions independently as a figure, indexing a unique, though sometimes overlapping, set of ideas, implications, values, feelings, and politics. I engage youth because of its litheness and dexterity as a figure; youth refers denotatively to a young person, a group of young people, a period of one's life, and/or a state of mind or being. Youth too names young people on the cusp of adulthood, ripe with becoming. Youth places young people into the public, via youth culture and youth movements, in ways that other terms related to adolescence often do not.

In invoking youth, we refer to a sense of promise, hope, or progress—actual or projected—on the horizon. Youth indexes freshness, optimism, agility, flexibility, edge. These characteristics are valorized and coveted across discursive spheres. Politicians chase the youth vote. We eagerly follow youth movements and young activists. We envy youth's time, their boldness, their inventiveness. Advertisers compete for the attention of the youth market. Trends glorify youth. Entire industries have sprung up, devoted to serving up or preserving youthfulness. What animates youth and what is animated by youth is not always uncomplicatedly optimistic, though. The figure of youth is complex and even at times contradictory, as communications and media scholar Fleur Gabriel has noted. Youth is both a recognizable figure (nameable, identifiable) and a transitory one (inevitably barreling towards adulthood). Youth's becoming is both inevitable and unpredictable. Youth is always "the same and different, distinct and

emerging, central and marginal" (Gabriel 2). By better understanding the richness in and the power of the figure of youth, we gain critical insights into who we are and where we are in this cultural, political, and economic moment. Making sense of youth can help us better understand what moves us, for example, in a story about a teenage (or preteen) businessman like Jaequan or Reginald.

The intertwining of discourses about youth and economy, I argue, is not coincidental. The very identification of adolescence, as both biological window of time and as a demographic category, has economic roots. Phillipe Ariès, a cultural historian, notes the connections between the modern idea of the child and economic status. In the seventeenth century, he argues, "[o]ne could only leave childhood by leaving the state of dependence" (26). At the start of the twentieth century, G. Stanley Hall, an American psychologist and educator, first identified the contemporary category of adolescence, describing it as a period of "storm and stress" (Cart 4). Programs for educating young people and guiding them through this stage, including life manuals marketed and sold to adolescents, sprung up in the first decades of the twentieth century (Cart 5). The Great Depression, which pushed young people out of the workforce (Cart 5); the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which set minimum age requirements for certain kinds of labor (Fried); and compulsory schooling laws across the nation brought adolescent bodies together for extended periods of time in the 1920s and 1930s. Schools thus served as breeding grounds for youth culture, which in turn led to the "co-opting of the adolescent … by popular culture" by the middle of the century (Cart 5–6). Since it first entered our collective imagination, the concept of youth has been shaped by and has contained traces of capitalism's development, practices, and proliferation. Like earlier forms of

capitalism, our contemporary form, neoliberalism, thrives on youthful qualities like innovation, perpetual newness, risk-taking, and growth. Under neoliberalism's regime, economic logics disperse into noneconomic spheres, a characteristic of this political economic moment about which I will say more later in this introduction. Excavating and tracking the figure of youth in the neoliberal moment can help us better understand capitalism's influences in those spheres.

As the stories of Mr. Faulkner's Old Fashioned Hot Dogs and Reggie Boyz Lawn Care suggest, the possibilities for following and analyzing the figure of youth and its relationship with political economy are virtually boundless. In this project, though, I ground my inquiry in sites of rhetorical education. I borrow from Jessica Enoch's flexible and expansive definition of rhetorical education, in which she "equates rhetorical education with any educational program that *develops* in students a communal and civic identity and *articulates* for them the rhetorical strategies, language practices, and bodily and social behaviors that make possible their participation in communal and civic affairs" (Enoch 7–8, emphasis original). My interest in reading youth and rhetorical education together in this way is to better understand how neoliberalism circulates in scenes of teaching and learning, both institutional and extracurricular. In this way, my work draws from and builds on longstanding critiques of capitalism and its consequences for education. While much of that scholarship analyzes the costs—both literal and metaphorical—of late capitalism for universities, students, and teachers, I identify through my research some of the quieter and more subtle ways that capitalism co=opts, changes, and constrains the work of rhetorical education. Reading capitalism's

influences on rhetorical education through the figure of youth allows me to attend, for example, to the affective pedagogical impulses of political economy.

In this dissertation, I argue that because the figure of youth reflects and influences our cultural imagination, epistemological practices, and everyday social lives, it warrants our critical attention. I trace youth across three sites of rhetorical education since the mid-twentieth century, analyzing how our investments in youth are *always already* intermingled with—among other things—capitalist ideas, values, habits, and practices. I explore how we engage youth in our disciplinary conversations, what we rely on it to do, what it does unbeknownst to us, and how it both facilitates and limits our critical pedagogical ambitions. I intervene in ongoing discussions about how capitalism has changed and threatened the work we do in higher education, building on existing critiques of privatization, austerity, and the corporatization of the university as I consider some of the smaller, more slippery ways that neoliberalism moves through our academic and intellectual spaces. As I track the depth and breadth of capitalism's influence in rhetorical education, I tune in to affect, a powerful pedagogical medium for neoliberalism and, I ultimately argue, a vital and capacious creative mode through which we might locate new possibilities for rhetorical education and rhetorical agency in this moment.

In what remains of this introduction, I outline some of my key terms and situate my research among them. First, I historicize youth, recounting previous explorations of youth as a figure and locating youth in rhetorical studies. Next, I define neoliberalism and summarize some of the existing scholarship about capitalism and the university. I then describe affect, paying particular attention to how pedagogy brings together affect

studies and rhetoric and composition. Finally, I offer a brief overview of the chapters, introducing the specific sites of rhetorical education I will explore and analyze.

Figuring Youth

Mine is not the first project to study youth as a figure. Claudia Castañeda, in *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds*, which I cited above, locates children in scientific research, transnational adoptions, and global organ trades in order to learn more about how the child "is repeatedly figured as an entity in the making" (1). Her project is largely exploratory, identifying instances where the figure of the child is "fed" or "filled" and where it "flows." Fleur Gabriel's *Deconstructing Youth: Youth Discourses at the Limits of Sense*, also cited above, describes youth as a "'third' term, *the exclusion of which* makes the child/adult 'binary' possible" (4, emphasis original). Gabriel argues that youth's signifier marks it as "excessive," which in turn leads us to imagine youth "as a social problem that needs to be 'fixed'" (6). Through her deconstructive readings, he seeks to "[set] up an alternative way of approaching the question of youth" (13). Where Gabriel sees youth under epistemological threat, Lee Edelman, a queer theorist, reads the child as itself a threat to contemporary existence. Challenging the cultural privileges of what he calls "reproductive futurism" (2), Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* makes the case that the "figural Child alone embodies the citizen as an ideal, entitled to claim full rights to its future share in the nation's good, though always at the cost of limiting the rights 'real' citizens are allowed" (11). Our collective obsession with the child, its well-being, and its inheritance, Edelman maintains, "serves to regulate political discourse … by compelling such discourse to accede in advance to the reality

of a collective future whose figurative status we are never permitted to acknowledge or address" (11). Edelman rejects this social order, advocating instead for a kind of presentism which would promote invention and encourage a "willingness to insist intransitively … that the future stops here" (31).

Rhetoric scholars have also studied the language, politics, and epistemologies of youth, both the figure and the people. A recent issue of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, in fact, "focus[es] on rhetoric and the child" and "remind[s] [us] of the cultural construction of the category of childhood wherein the child becomes a figure to be used, sometimes as a weapon, in cultural struggles" (Jarratt 1). In the issue, Ian Barnard argues that anxieties around protecting children from sex, sexuality, and sexual abuse enable and indeed promote a homophobic, anti-queer agenda. Elsewhere in the issue, Allison L. Rowland analyzes "how biopolitical hierarchies become persuasive" (28) in ways that make it possible to give voices to fetuses, who, as "'unborn babies,'" have something to say for themselves in the abortion debate (27).

While Barnard and Rowland take up the figure of youth, rhetorical studies about young people often focus on actual children and their lived experiences as rhetors. Risa Applegarth's contribution to the *RSQ* special issue exemplifies this approach, as she recovers the political activities of children who fought to have a peace statue, which they designed, erected in Los Alamos, New Mexico, in the early 1990s. Applegarth attends to the vigorous rejection of the children's plans by the city's adult residents, analyzing how "[c]hildren speaking threaten to revise their own symbolic associations," "promise that past and present narratives will mean and do unsanctioned things in the future," and "threaten … a loss of control over how a community is configured, who it includes,

and what it values" (71). The work in this issue, both about the figure of youth and about young people, draws attention to threats *of* youth and *to* youth, teasing out the rhetorical possibilities for and limits of various kinds of action in these discursive scenes.

A special issue of *JAC* from 2013 on "Rhetorics Regulating Childhood and Children's Rights," edited by Wendy S. Hesford and Katrina M. Powell, collects work similar to Applegarth's, focusing on how we might make space for young people in the public sphere. In the issue, Arabella Lyon argues that children are a particularly defenseless class of people: "[L]ack[ing] the cultural competence, rhetorical and citizen knowledge, and access to communication technologies required to intervene in politics," they are often denied "the inherent dignity of equal and inalienable rights" which adults, "as the normative group," can demand (508). Through its considerations of the "representational challenges" of young people, "our ethical obligations in reshaping public discourse on childhood," and how we might "generat[e] deliberative publics that welcome children as political, cultural, and moral actors" (Hesford 409), the issue demands that young people be taken seriously and be treated respectfully as actors and agents. Hesford offers a case study of Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani teenager who was shot by the Taliban on her way home from school in 2012. Hesford argues that while people around the world were quick to take on Malala as a "symbol of liberal internationalism" (408), young people should be able to set their own agendas and to speak first about their experiences. She insists that "we should look toward youth activism as a rhetorical modality that presses upon international and domestic publics the necessity of a deliberative response, a response that expands the parameters of action and adult capacities to work with children as political actors" (419). In her

contribution to the issue, Powell analyzes the discourses that enabled and defended laws permitting the forced sterilization of some children in the state of Virginia throughout much of the twentieth century, identifying how these kids fell victim to “the convergence of conservation, 1920s social liberalism, and racial purity” (457). Wendy Wolters Hinshaw also looks at how our legal systems fail our children, as she considers the ways that anti-bullying efforts have led to increased surveillance of young people and to “wider cultural patterns of ‘upcriming,’ or the increased severity of criminal penalties” for young offenders (500). Kerry Bystrom and Brenda Werth consider how identity rights discourses drive efforts to find “stolen children” who disappeared after the “Dirty War” in Argentina (426). In each of these articles, the authors focus on the relative invisibility and vulnerability of young people’s current situations while also asserting the value and potential of young people’s participation in public spaces.

These special issues serve as useful archives for my work in this project. Collected together, this scholarship showcases a rich array of figurations of youth and the relationships between those figurations and rhetorical and epistemological possibilities. Here we see youth as radical agent and as fragile victim. We see calls for adults to get out of youth’s way; to step up and protect youth; or to stand in front of, beside, or behind youth. The complexities in and around youth captured in this work demonstrate the need for the kind of meta-analysis I take on in this dissertation, a tracing of the figure of youth through our own disciplinary histories and practices.

Outside of these special issues, the figure of youth often hides in plain sight in much of the work of our field. That is to say, much of the work in rhetoric and composition that is informed by the figure of youth and which in turn informs our sense

of youth does not actually take youth as its object of study. Our discipline is built around the project of molding young people through education. We rely heavily on the trappings and accompaniments of youth to make sense of who we are, what we do, and why we do it. Youth are our students, and while youth has lives beyond our classrooms, students' "youthiness" is a critical part of how we imagine them, how we design our curriculum, and what we hope we can accomplish through our teaching. To understand how intertwined the figure of youth is with our work, we can look at our reliance on metaphors of growth, our attachments to process as part of learning, the ways we study development and maturation, the hopefulness of our work, and our commitments to building a better future, to name just a few. By following the figure of youth through sites of rhetorical education, I argue that we can develop new insights about those entanglements which can enrich our understandings of youth and position us to better deploy the figure of youth and to serve youth, our students.

Defining Neoliberalism

Scholars across disciplines have identified a potential challenge to the hopeful, future-building projects of academic research and teaching: neoliberalism. In its strictest economic sense, neoliberalism is "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2). In a historical sense, neoliberalism names eras in which neoliberal policies have flourished: the post-Soviet moment; the deregulation of commerce and industry and the privatization of goods and

services since the 1970s; and the rise of non-state institutions (the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO), which have taken up some of the roles left vacant by states' withdrawals from the economic sphere (Harvey 2–3). While these facets of neoliberalism are significant for my research, the aspect of neoliberalism which is most critical to this project concerns the cultural, social, and epistemological consequences of these economic policy priorities and historical economic trends. One of neoliberalism's signature, and most insidious, features is its ability to spread economic values and logics beyond traditional economic spheres. Its proclivity for creep, David Harvey suggests, has converted neoliberalism into a "hegemonic … mode of discourse[,] … to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (3). Neoliberalism is a way of describing a culture and its context, a set of conditions and its own system of privileged values, translated from economic policies into cultural and social infrastructures and circulated through typical patterns of daily life and interpersonal interactions.

While these definitions of neoliberalism treat it as a descriptor, scholarship around neoliberalism has often focused on it as a force of change, if not perversion. Such work traces the damaging consequences of the system as it restructures or wrecks our societies. Neoliberalism is, as Wendy Brown argues, "profoundly destructive to the fiber and future" of our world, and to democracy in particular. She writes,

> More than merely saturating the meaning or content of democracy with market values, neoliberalism assaults the principles, practices, cultures, subjects, and institutions of democracy understood as rule by the people. And more than merely cutting away the flesh of liberal democracy,

neoliberalism also cauterizes democracy's more radical expressions. …

(9)

Neoliberal logics not only spread and influence the world, but they also fundamentally alter the terms and conditions of living within it. For rhetorical educators, whose work is concerned with preparing young people as citizens in the world, paying attention to these changes matters.

Significantly for scholars and teachers of rhetoric, neoliberalism alters what it means to be a human subject and what becomes possible for them. Because of "[t]he contemporary 'economization' of subjects by neoliberal rationality," Brown argues, humans are primarily economic beings in all aspects of their lives—the political, moral, and ethical spheres notwithstanding (33). The neoliberal subject, as "*Homo oeconomicus*," "takes its shape as human capital seeking to strengthen its competitive positioning and appreciate its value, rather than as a figure of exchange or interest" (33). *Homo oeconomicus* is forward thinking but operates on logics of financialization, forever gambling, speculating, and subjecting itself to risk (33). Under neoliberalism, inequality surpasses equality as the "medium and relation of competing capitals"; labor is devalued and disappears, especially as a category of relationality and collectivity; and public life and public goods are dissolved (39–40). Neoliberalism thereby poses a significant threat to schools and universities, especially public ones, and undermines our investments in education as a means for building a better future.

Neoliberalism imperils our institutions for learning, both as a form of capitalism and in more particular ways. Richard Ohmann famously argued in *English in America* that "the economic system, 'in spite of the vanity of educators,' decides what kind of

education a society will arrange for its young" (xix). Though critiques of political economy and its consequences for education and for the university more specifically pre-date neoliberalism, much of what has been said about earlier forms of capitalism can be applied to a critique of neoliberalism. Capitalism influences universities at both the structural level—through funding decisions, resource allocations, corporate partnerships, and adjustments to bureaucratic and administrative structures—and at the level of curricula, as many courses of study seek to prepare students for success in the world which awaits them. Under neoliberalism, however, a move further away from public goods and toward private property, the increased sense of humans as human capital, and the co=opting of logic and rationality by economic values have meant drastic and unique changes for higher education.

Much good research has been done to record, anticipate, and respond to those changes. Christopher Newfield, in *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class*, offers one account of how capitalism has changed the university. He begins his narrative in the 1980s and 1990s, as technology industries boomed and the information economy took root. Here, he argues, the university "created the new technology and the technocratic workforce to run and continuously reinvent the New Economy" (9). As university research and training "produced flexible, adaptable, innovative workers who could thrive in a rapidly growing economy" and whose skills "would give their companies the indispensable competitive edge," the very idea of a university education began to be understood as a "private good" that could also "benefit society as a whole" (9). The perceived value of such an education thusly grew, in turn justifying higher tuition, loans and other start-up costs. To attend a

university began to be understood as an investment in oneself, and the student inhabited the roles of consumer and entrepreneur in relation to the academy. At the same time, “university administrators and faculty became closer to industry,” as corporations funneled research funds into university science and engineering labs (9). Universities, desperate to stay afloat amidst budget cuts, adapted their business and accounting practices. They “transform[ed]…student centers into midprice shopping malls” through “the outsourcing of many non-core services” (9), and their infrastructural development became “increasingly dependent on private funds” (10). At the core of these changes, Newfield argues, was “[a]n internally coherent logic,” one which prioritized return-on-investment thinking and which therefore worked to make “the university’s core functions … more responsive to market forces and business methods” (10).

In this telling, the university is fundamentally altered by capitalist logics and values; neoliberalism ultimately co-opts the educational scene. The trouble with the neoliberal public university, Lisa Duggan argues, is that it functions as “a kind of factory, churning out workers with adequate vocational skills but narrow intellectual horizons and low expectations” (34–5). This reality “contrast[s] with a range of other liberal, progressive and radical visions of public higher education as preparation for critical citizenship,” including “teaching students to assess the history of humanity’s broadest visions for collective public life, and to then judge for themselves the agendas of politicians” (34–5). What is pushed out of the university by neoliberalism is the “‘democratizing missions’ of yore” (Newfield 9), an ethical sense of shared future-building, and creativity without a profit-drive.

Some scholars have argued that youth are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of neoliberalism. Henry Giroux, for instance, has cataloged the attacks on youth by state and society in the neoliberal moment in his recent book *America's Education Deficit and the War on Youth*. He points to the deterioration of social services and support for young people (101), the frequency of police assaults on student protestors (101), and the disproportionate numbers of "low-income and poor minority youth … under the authority of the criminal justice system" (101) as examples of the increasingly hostile social space young people inhabit. Giroux argues,

> [w]hat has changed about an entire generation of young people includes not only neoliberal society's disinvestment in youth and the permanent fate of downward mobility but also the fact that youth live in a commercially carpet-bombed and commodified environment that is unlike anything experienced by those of previous generations. Nothing has prepared this generation for the inhospitable and savage new world of commodification, privatization, joblessness, frustrated hope, and stillborn projects. (108)

The "suicidal state" (101), as he terms it, cheats young people out of the future promised to them; democracy, and thereby youth, he argues, persist only on "life support" (106). Giroux's critique, however, is not devoid of optimism; at the end of his book, he advocates for a "dangerous pedagogy," one which he hopes can offset the negative effects of neoliberalism on young people, or at least prepare them to fight back.

Research about neoliberalism and higher education often takes the loss of the university's utopian functions as its drive, striving not only to account for the damage neoliberalism has done to the public university but also to imagine ways to counter it. We see this kind of "activist scholarship" often in the field of rhetoric and composition. Bruce Horner, for example, in both *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique* and *Rewriting Composition: Terms of Exchange*, takes stock of neoliberalism's consequences across our field and the field's functions under neoliberalism, arguing that economy is wrapped up in our very disciplinary identity. Through his keyword projects, he explores the complexities of our field's "tense" or "ambivalent" sense of "who we are, what we do, with whom, and our reasons for doing so" (*Terms* xv). He "trace[s] the ways in which … specific [terms operate] as … site[s] for competing constructions of Composition's identity" (xv). Horner's cultural materialist critiques draw attention to "the power of existing material conditions to shape the work we do in composition and the historicity of those conditions—that is, their susceptibility to changing consciousness and action" (xvi).

Tony Scott and Nancy Welch similarly track the "sea change toward privatization and the economization of public services" (7) in their collection, *Composition in the Age of Austerity*. By breaking apart the "promise" of austerity as a response to neoliberal crises, Scott and Welch highlight the need for new kinds of response. "Austerity measures," they argue, "are at once an opportunistic response to specific instances of declared crisis and part of a widespread, long-term national … agenda to fundamentally restructure postsecondary education" (9). While the collection tracks the "full and far-reaching implications" of neoliberal encroachment on "the work and mission of

composition," it also "examine[s] how our cherished rhetorical ideals…leave the field insufficiently prepared to respond" to it (6–7). Scott and Welch issue a call for "new rhetorics and strategies for resistance" (7).

The two authors have taken on neoliberalism elsewhere too. In his monograph, *Dangerous Writing: Understanding the Political Economy of Composition*, Scott challenges composition scholars to consider how the field's social turn inscribed particular logics and relationships into the discipline, inadvertently pushing it "toward more easily commodified and administered pedagogies and away from the immediate, the creative, and the politically meaningful (and perhaps dangerous)" (8). Welch, in *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World*, calls for the return of two "neglected canons" of rhetoric, delivery and memory, as a means to speak back to the privatization of public spaces under neoliberalism; how else are we "to teach effective, responsive rhetorical practices in an era of shopping malls and Clear Channel, of state-sanctioned ethnic profiling and militarized responses to public protest, of private economic interests colluding to shape public policy on everything from energy to interest rates to access to health care and the airwaves?" she asks (5).

There is more good work circulating out there in rhetoric and composition journals that tackles neoliberalism too. Marc Bousquet's scathing critique of the writing program administrator's managerial role in the university calls into question how institutional structures are influenced and shaped by economic trends and demands. Rachel Riedner, in *Writing Neoliberal Values: Rhetorical Connectivities and Globalized Capitalism*, argues that political economic values saturate even the very forms and genres of writing in the neoliberal moment; she analyzes the way that "affective

human-interest stories … celebrat[e] the marketization of individuals and of social life [and do] not attend to the violence that is immanent to their narratives" (ii). Her argument certainly rings true in the anecdotes with which this introduction began. Riedner calls for the cultivations of "feminist literacies" through which writers can better address neoliberalist crises (iii).

Other scholars have identified tensions between the expectations for and demands on writing classes—especially those coming from university administrators, entrepreneurial students like the ones Newfield discussed, or faculty in other departments—and neoliberal critique. As rhetoricians and compositionists know, writing courses are sometimes seen as preparatory, content-less courses, designed to prepare students to write well both in their "real" classes and for their future employers. Research attending to this tension proposes a variety of different ways to address it. Shari Stenberg, in *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age*, "aims to illuminate, and argue for repurposing, the problems and practices of neoliberal influences on postsecondary education" (4). She considers how things like emotion, agency, listening, and accountability, despite their neoliberal attachments, can work to challenge neoliberalism and calls for a "both/and approach" to teaching, one which "allows us to consider how we can take seriously our students' material needs for job readiness as well as … highlight and enact the feminist ideas that may otherwise be obscured in the neoliberal university" (9, 40). In his recent *College Composition and Communication* article, "'Is College Worth It?' Arguing for Composition's Value with the Citizen-Worker," Chase Bollig argues that the concept of the "citizen-worker" should serve to remind us that "'the good man speaking well' is looking for a job after

graduation" (151). He maintains that "composition curricula [ought to be] attuned to the needs of citizen-workers" (152) in ways that make our classes responsive to students' needs for procuring and maintaining employment and that give composition an opportunity to redefine its "worth."

Neoliberalism's *felt* consequences have also captured the attention of scholars in rhetoric and composition. Steve Lamos, for instance, has theorized the "negative affect" of teaching-track faculty labor in writing programs, which "serve[s] to make it feel (discursively, psychically, somatically) unimportant, uninteresting, and ultimately unworthy of attention" (363). Jennifer Sano-Franchini, drawing from interviews with recent job searchers, has accounted for the emotional labor of the academic job market, describing the "performed intimacies" (106) demanded by job letters and interviews, and the skewed temporalities which simultaneously rush and preclude the development of intimacy between candidates and committees (112). In "Beyond Marketability: Locating Teacher Agency in the Neoliberal University," Stenberg highlights the angst that new TAs feel when they sense that their teaching personas might exceed neoliberal subjecthood, when they fear they might be "too political, too female, too queer, etc." to be a "good investment" (192) for the university. This attention to feeling and sensation taps into the affective dimensions of neoliberal life. Such research has been made possible, in part, by the recent uptake in rhetoric and composition of affect studies and affect theory, to which I will turn briefly now.

Critical Feelings and Feeling Critically

If you ask a person who studies affect, affect is and always has been everywhere. There is no such thing as an affective vacuum. Scholars who are less interested in affect though may have sensed a recent uptick in work about the topic. An *Affect Theory Reader*; a newly launched journal, *Capacious: Emerging Affect Inquiry*; and a conference dedicated specifically to the study of affect may have contributed to that impression. While there is a lot of work on affect, though, no single definition of it exists. It is, by its very nature, difficult to define.

In "An Inventory of Shimmers," the introductory chapter to the aforementioned *Affect Theory Reader*, editors Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg describe affect as that which "arises in the midst of in-betweenness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (1). It is "the name we give to those forces … that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations[,] or that can leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability" (1, emphasis original). Affect is a felt, embodied phenomenon—the product of bodies bumping up against one another. Affect is forever aggregating and thus changing, and it is always in motion. What is perhaps most compelling about affect for rhetoric and composition scholars is not just its movement but also its ability to move, to influence.

At its core, affect is about sensation as sense-making. By some accounts (Berlant; Massumi, "Autonomy"; Massumi, *Power*), affect is the primary medium through which we encounter the world, and by nearly all accounts, affect affects how we relate to others and move through shared physical, cultural, historical, and social spaces. In

that sense, affect is pedagogical. It influences who and how we are in the world. Lauren Berlant argues that because "affective atmospheres are shared" and "bodies are continuously busy judging their environments and responding to the atmospheres in which they find themselves" (15), affect is a teaching medium. We learn through "the repetitions of relation, the buildup, the pressure over time that becomes a habit that seems intuitive. One assesses what affective events are according to one's education in attunement, in tracking repetition, form, and norm" (158). Similarly, Sara Ahmed describes emotions as feelings that move, stick, and slide—and which themselves "take shape as effects of circulation" (10). Emotions, forged in motion, maintain their momentum and impress on subjects—or not. What sticks, when, and how shapes and habituates us, teaches us: "The most immediate of our bodily reactions can thus be treated as a pedagogy" (212), Ahmed says; "feelings[,] in being directed towards objects[,] become directive" (219).

Importantly, scholars like Berlant and Ahmed understand their work on affect, at least in part, to be a form of political economic critique. Berlant's notion of cruel optimism attends to affect in order to characterize the "historical sensorium" (3) of the present, to "name … a personal and collective kind of relation and set its elaboration in [the] historical moment" of transnational late capitalism (11). Ahmed's work on emotion is interested in its production. Making a connection between emotions and Marx's account of commodities, Ahmed "suggests that emotions are erased by the value of things" (11). Ahmed identifies that, like commodities and their prices, "feelings come to reside in objects, magically, as if they are qualities of or in things, only by cutting those objects off from a wider economy of labour and production" (227). That feelings both

contain and lose their historical traces as they accumulate in and around objects is an essential part of their pedagogical project.

Catherine Chaput, a rhetorical scholar, is also interested in the specific ways that affect flows and persuades in the neoliberal moment. “The neoliberal landscape,” she argues, “consists of blurred boundaries that fold into one another” (2). Its space is unfavorable to rationalism and deliberation. Instead, neoliberalism “governs our everyday activities through an embodied habituation—a way of thinking and acting that stems from discrete but interconnected technologies all bound up within the same asymmetrical power dynamics of economic competition” (4). Neoliberalism, Chaput argues, spreads “as an energy moving between human beings…that inspire[s] behavior instinctively…[and] does not crumble under the deliberative weight of better arguments or more information” (8). This persuasiveness, combined with affect’s ability to move, helps to explain neoliberalism’s efficacy in spreading economic logics beyond economic spheres.

While affect can transmit neoliberal values and ideas across discursive domains, affect does not “work” for neoliberalism. Rather, affect is a powerful medium, one without its own political agenda, and a powerful mode of persuasion. Affect, then, may be of particular interest for both cultural critics and critical educators. Another of affect’s assets for critical work, and part of what makes affect so “capacious,” is that it can provide opportunities and space for invention, imagination, and play beyond the reach of economic logics. Because neoliberalism functions as a “normative order of reason” and “governing rationality” (Brown 10), it may no longer be possible to think our way out of this system. Indeed, Frederic Jameson has quipped that it may be easier to “imagine

the end of the world than the end of capitalism" (199). Affect, however, exists independently from reason and rationality. Affect exists in and amongst bodies. It is shared. It is the present, and it demands presence. To consider affect requires some cognitive letting go or loosening up. In these ways, I argue in the conclusion, affect may be the mode of not resistance but difference we need to feel our way through neoliberalism.

Recounting and Accounting

It is worth pausing here, before I describe each of the chapters and the work that leads me to that conclusion, to put all of this together more succinctly, to bring closer and to make clearer the connections between the key terms described above and the direction of this project. In this dissertation, I trace the figure of youth across various sites of rhetorical education to explore how that which youth evokes and that which is evoked by youth—including hope and danger, freshness and rawness, innovation and inexperience—function in these scenes. Though I do not attend explicitly here to questions of labor, production, value or other more traditional objects of study in political economic critiques, I imagine this project as an extension of that scholarly tradition. By studying the figure of youth and the ways that political economic logics move through it to exert influence in other social spaces, I add to critiques of neoliberalism, especially those concerned with how neoliberalism has changed higher education. I pay specific attention in each of the three sites of rhetorical education I study to affect: the affective lives of youth, the affects associated with the figure of youth, and the affective disciplining, implicit and explicit, which pervades rhetorical education. Affect, I argue,

merits our critical consideration in the neoliberal moment, as it both facilitates the proliferation of economic values into noneconomic spheres and creates space and opportunities to experience—to feel, to sense, to be—outside of economic logics. Tapping into this latter potential of affect in our teaching and research, I suggest, might give critical scholars and teachers some leverage in their ongoing struggles against neoliberalism in the academy.

In chapter 2, “A ‘Satisfying’ and ‘Profitable’ Democratic Education: Life Adjustment and the Making of American Youth into Citizens,” I explore a pre-neoliberal site of rhetorical education. I revisit Life Adjustment education, a secondary-school reform effort that aimed to prepare teenagers for productive civic and economic lives in the post-war era, by reading the Life Adjustment bulletin published by the Office of Education, as well as reports on Life Adjustment schools and public debates about the reform’s merits. I note through this exploration how Life Adjustment regarded young people with suspicion but also saw them to have promise, training them to develop habits that limited their liability to their community and helped them find joy in both productive labor and responsible consumption. By beginning at a site of rhetorical education before the rise of neoliberalism, I contextualize neoliberalism and its relationship to education within a larger history of capitalism. I demonstrate in this chapter how the idea of “growing up” is entangled with ideals of financial self-sufficiency and explore how educational curricula can privilege particular types of affective relationships in response to economic anxieties and ideals.

With Chapter 3, “Reading Between the Lines: What Culturally Engaged Composition Textbooks Can Tell Us about Youth,” I move my inquiry closer to the

neoliberal present. I trace the figure of youth across three cultural studies–inspired writing textbooks from the 1990s. I approach these texts—*Common Culture: Reading and Writing about American Popular Culture*, *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*, and *Media Journal: Reading and Writing about Popular Culture*— in an exploratory way, seeking to learn how the figure of youth informs each text's vision for rhetorical education. I consider how each textbook's reading selections, "teaching" sections, and exercises position and figure youth and young people's agency. Finally, I reflect on the genre of the textbook and the limitations of the textbook as a market commodity in the sort of politically engaged educational projects that cultural studies endorses.

In Chapter 4, "Are They Feeling It?: Discussion Questions as Affective Guides to Dystopian YA Fiction," I follow the figure of youth into an extracurricular site of rhetorical education: the discussion question sets that accompany three dystopian young adult (YA) novels. I collect research and criticism about YA, and dystopian YA in particular, which articulates the pedagogical function of the popular genre. What YA has to teach its readers, scholars and critics agree, is often ethical: these novels teach young people how to relate to each other and to the world and ask them to think about who they want to be in their societies. Taking up *Feed* by M.T. Anderson, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, and *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, I locate that affective disciplining in these novels' discussion question sets. I consider the "cognitive" and "affective" impulses in each set, identifying how those impulses support or challenge the utopian potential often projected on those novels.

While part of this project takes the form of a critique in what Wendy Brown calls the “classic sense of the word”—“an effort to comprehend the constitutive elements and dynamics of our condition” (28)—I move in the conclusion toward a more constructive mode. Drawing from the figure of youth, I end with a touch of optimism, imagining what a fresh, youthful approach to teaching might look like and what it might do. In “Political Sensations: Toward a Critical Affective Pedagogy,” I make a theoretical case for a playful pedagogy, one which gives affect a more prominent space in our field’s critical educational projects. I include three brief case studies of teaching practices, located in and outside of the academy, in which affect is used in creative and critical ways. From these models, I tease out potential tactical approaches for a different sort of progressive-minded, politically engaged pedagogy.

CHAPTER TWO

A "Satisfying" and "Profitable" Democratic Education: Life Adjustment and the Making of American Youth into Citizens

There is no dearth of anxiety about neoliberalism and its consequences for higher education. Consequently, we have recently seen a wave of scholarship within the English studies corner of the university engaging with and critiquing this iteration of political economy. Within the last two years, rhet/comp alone has seen a special issue of *College Composition and Communication* on "The Political Economies of Composition Studies" (September 2016); Nancy Welch and Tony Scott's edited collection, *Composition in the Age of Austerity* (2016); Shari J. Stenberg's *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age* (2015); Rachel C. Riedner's *Writing Neoliberal Values: Rhetorical Connectivities and Global Capitalism* (2015); and a handful of articles across our professional journals, including *College English*, which attest to our intense critical interest in this stage of capitalism.

The scholars whose work appears in these collections and monographs trace neoliberalism into various dimensions of our work: writing program curricula, assessment practices, the job market, the exploitation of adjunct and contingent labor, etc. Through their research, we come to see not only how neoliberalism has altered the structure of our field and the nature of writing itself, but also how it has amplified affective tensions between us and the work that we do. Steve Lamos's research, for instance, considers the ways writing program labor can be deflating for tenure-track faculty members. Jennifer Sano-Franchini describes the emotional labor demanded by the academic job market. Shari Stenberg tracks teaching assistants' anxieties as they

work to fit themselves into professional roles in the university ("Beyond"). While these neoliberal predicaments affect people across the academic community, those of us in English studies—where shrinking budgets, disappearing tenure lines, and an increased reliance on part-time and contingent instructors make up the new normal—may feel them even more intensely.

But it is not only the professionals in our field who experience the consequences, affective and otherwise, of neoliberalism. As other scholars have noted, our students also feel the pinch of this political economic system. Certainly, we have all heard our students describe their difficulties with accessing classes they need to graduate, overloading on units as a cost-saving measure, balancing increasingly heavy part-time workloads on top of their academic responsibilities, and financing their educations through whatever means possible. These challenges, caused or exacerbated by neoliberalism, impact our students academically, economically, and affectively. Some scholars have suggested that even the courses available to students have bent under the weight of neoliberalism, criticizing the "job-training" impulses of contemporary writing classes (Larson). Taking another approach, Chase Bollig has argued that we ought to attend to students' economic desires by embracing the realization that "'the good man speaking well' is looking for a job after graduation" (151) and actively working to close the gap between students' labor experiences as citizen-workers and our curricula.

In each of these examples, the specificity of neoliberalism—austerity, cycles of crisis, precarious employment options, the rise of creative and informational industries, etc.—is at the crux of the critique. And while critiques of neoliberalism's particular consequences for education are crucial, it is equally important that we understand

neoliberalism for what it is—the latest iteration of capitalism—and that we place it in conversation with its predecessors. Capitalism, after all, has moved through our institutions since long before neoliberalism got its name, and capitalism, in all its forms, has always engaged in the rewriting of subjectivity and social relations. Prior to the rise of neoliberalism, capitalistic values, trends, and imperatives still reshaped curricula, redefined learning objectives, and influenced the "schooling" of student subjects, sharpening their emotional reflexes against economic logics.

In this chapter, I recover one pre-neoliberal moment in which capitalism influenced the reimagining of education: the post-WWII Life Adjustment reform movement. By returning to Life Adjustment and teasing out the role that capitalism played in informing its progressively intentioned reform initiatives, I demonstrate that neoliberal's insidiousness, while worth attending to in specific ways, is not an entirely new predicament for education. Approaching Life Adjustment through published documents about the movement and published debates about its value and implementation, I highlight the affective and dispositional dimensions of this pedagogical training—often situated within the English studies curriculum—which aimed to shape young people and their relationships to one another and the world. I pay particular attention to how these texts figure youth, the embodiments and inheritors of the future Life Adjustment envisioned. Though Life Adjustment mainly concerned secondary schools, its reforms posed and answered implicit questions about who students were, what they needed, and how society ought to imagine the value and function of higher education, questions that we continue to grapple with today. In that respect, it merits the attention of contemporary educators across levels.

Considering neoliberalism's kinship to an earlier form of capitalism, I argue, offers a new critical perspective of neoliberalism and its consequences for education. There is much we can learn from this comparative exercise. Through Life Adjustment, we gain a more historical perspective of how capitalism has influenced or co-opted education in its earlier iterations. We get a sense of how capitalism, including neoliberalism, gets filtered through other political and historical factors; how it is likely to be picked up and manipulated by variously invested parties; and perhaps most importantly, how it moves through education covertly, through affect and through its figurations of youth. Armed with this knowledge, we can gain a better sense of what to expect from neoliberalism and how we might respond to it.

The Context for Life Adjustment

On June 1, 1945, the final day of the national "Vocational Education in the Years Ahead" conference, Dr. Charles A. Prosser issued a call for reforming education to "adjust" young people for their lives as citizens. There was much happening that people, young and old alike, might need to adjust to. The U.S. and the world were buzzing with change. The summer of 1945 found the United States still fiercely engaged in the second World War, though victory had been declared in Europe one month earlier. Very soon after, atomic bombs dropped by U.S. planes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki would informally end the conflict in the Pacific. A variety of factors had dramatically increased the global movement of people: the U.S. was three years into the Bracero Program, which recruited temporary manual laborers from Mexico to work in American fields. The nation was bracing itself for an influx of immigrants from Asia, and the Displaced

Persons Act of 1948 would create pathways for hundreds of thousands of European refugees to settle in the United States. At the same time, national pride in the U.S. was swelling and, on the eve of the Cold War, the country was doubling down on both preserving and developing its national identity, one closely linked with its attachments to capitalism. Innovations in production line technologies, the emergence of new industries, a rise in consumption, and the related rise of marketing contributed to this economic boom, and as a result, cities grew and suburbia sprawled. These developments created new demand for workers, who in turn needed better and more stable wages to participate in the evolving economy.

Schools were feeling the pressure to take on some of the responsibility of training young people for new jobs and preparing them for new forms of economic participation. At the same time, the demographics of the U.S. school system were in flux. Compulsory education had expanded in the first three decades of the twentieth century, with most states already mandating education for young people until they turned sixteen, seventeen, or even eighteen years old. Michael Katz, an education scholar, describes the early twentieth century as a time characterized by change, anxiety, and dizzyingly fast movement: "[R]apid institutional and technological changes placed new strains on urban dwellers, and the influx of immigrants fueled fears of social chaos and the breakdown of American culture. Likewise, the demands of a growing corporate state cried out for large numbers of punctual, hardworking, and obedient workers" (24). This anxious momentum would not slow after World War II. The end of the war would usher in the "Golden Age" of Fordist capitalism; the Space Race and Cold War would

underwrite the moment;[2] and the G.I. Bill would change the nature and function of American higher education forever by opening the doors to college[3] to an unprecedented number of "nontraditional" students. Amid this motion and commotion, Life Adjustment entered the educational vernacular.

Capitalism and Citizenship in the Curriculum

The now famous "Prosser Resolution" that introduced Life Adjustment claimed that the contemporary secondary school curriculum was ill-suited to the needs of most of the American teenagers it aimed to serve. Prosser argued that "[sixty] percent of our youth of secondary school age [would not] receive the life-adjustment training they [would] need and to which they [were] entitled as American citizens" without substantial reform efforts targeting the general high school program (United States 16). Twenty percent of students, he continued, would be prepared by "the vocational school of a community … for entrance upon desirable skilled occupations," and "the high school [would] continue to prepare another [twenty] percent for entrance to college" (United States 16). Still, Prosser believed that the majority of young people were being left

---

[2] English scholars have begun to explore the educational agenda of the Cold War moment. Curtis Mason, for instance, has written on Project English, a federally funded initiative through which teachers, scholars, and professional organizations would make a case for English's importance for national security during the Cold War.

[3] Life Adjustment's relationship to college is a fascinating one. While some community colleges took up the language and objectives of Life Adjustment (Smith), many Life Adjustment reformers were hostile to postsecondary education. They expressed concern with the ways that "the influence of college [gave] prestige to traditional subjects and procedures … only because it has status" (United States 11) and attributed "the high school's failure to serve adequately a large proportion of its population" to "[t]he retention of the college-dominated curriculum" (United States 12) in the high schools. This image of a traditional college education offering specialized knowledge to a small population of select students seemed to Life Adjustment advocates to be both separate and distinct from the demands of citizenship. Certainly, as more and more students gained access to college in the coming decades, that perspective would be challenged, and college administrators and faculty would grapple with the question of what postsecondary education ought to do and for whom.

behind by their schools. Five regional conferences and one national conference followed the Resolution (Wraga 187), through which recommendations and guiding principles outlining a more holistic, inclusive, and relevant secondary school curriculum, a Life Adjustment curriculum, were defined.

Life Adjustment aimed to address aspects of life conventionally considered outside of school's jurisdiction, including family politics, budgets and spending, flexible job training, and appropriate leisure activities. This sprawl of curricular territory was motivated at least in part by the promotion of individual economic mobility and stability, but its economic agenda was couched in the language of both civic life and emotion. Put simply, the reforms set out to make better citizens of teenagers, instituting a sort of behavioral training program for young capitalists and consumers. According to *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth*, a 1951 bulletin published by the Federal Security Agency Office of Education and one of the most comprehensive documents defining Life Adjustment and its reach, these reforms "[would equip] all American youth to live democratically with satisfaction to themselves and profit to society as home members, workers, and citizens" (United States 9). Good citizens in a democracy, it argued, found success, and therefore happiness, through labor and spending while minimizing the possibility that they might become a burden to others.

Unlike educational reform programs of the late twentieth or early twenty-first century, Life Adjustment did not include specific implementation instructions, strict learning objectives, or accompanying standardized assessment mechanisms. Common wisdom across the movement held that the ideal high school curriculum would be individually tailored to the needs and desires of students, attuned to the needs and

desires of local communities, and customized to the strengths and capacities of each school. Life Adjustment proponents gathered together to draft best practices and philosophies for reforming the schools or to discuss local efforts towards shared intentions. The aforementioned bulletin laid out some of those aims. Individualism, a key theme in the movement, appeared as a call for schooling to be designed “for all American youth” in ways “appropriate to their capacities” (United States 9); the bulletin likewise insisted on “the importance of personal satisfactions and achievement for each individual within the limits of his abilities” (9). Without universal standards or assessment measures, Life Adjustment “[kept] an open road and stimulate[d] the maximum achievement” possible for each individual (10). A place remained in the curriculum for traditional subjects, as Life Adjustment understood such “fundamental skills” to be essential “for further achievements” (9). Nonetheless, employment held an equal share in schooling: Life Adjustment “respect[ed] the dignity of work and recognize[d] the educational values of responsible work experience in the life of the community” (10). The reform was oriented to the present rather than the past, “hold[ing] that the real significance of [historical] events [was] in their bearing upon life” (10) for contemporary students. Life Adjustment also kept one eye on the future, “emphasiz[ing] active and creative achievements as well as adjustment to existing conditions” and “[placing] a high premium upon learning to make wise choices…the very concept of American democracy” (10). The bulletin did not shy away from embracing its ambitions of affectively shaping young people: graduating students should, it maintained, meet “desired outcomes in terms of character and behavior” (10). This holistic approach to education was designed to “recognize the inherent dignity of the human personality”

(10). Life Adjustment imagined itself as a diverse and inclusive educational system, one which respected the strengths students brought with them, honored their individual goals and interests, and prepared them for success in the future. Each of those visions, however, got routed more often than not through an economic screen, complicating the project.

Charles A. Prosser was a lifelong advocate of vocational education, and in that regard, his vision for an intertwined school/work curriculum might not be surprising. More fascinating, however, is how Life Adjustment reads as a civic education project and how its vocational, civic, and general educational goals rely heavily on the shaping of habit and attitude. Alvin C. Eurich, the President of SUNY Albany, commented on this approach to civic education in a talk about Life Adjustment at the 1951 National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP) convention:

> [O]ur primary job in education is to develop a basic understanding and appreciation for what we call the democratic way of life: for food, for shelter, for clothing, to be sure; for honesty, for courage, for willingness to face problems and do our level best to solve them; for recognition of our responsibility to promote community co-operation and morality that will build a society of peace, understanding, and freedom; for, in short, understanding of our own inadequacies and an acceptance of our obligation to learn. (NASSP 139)

As Amy Wan reminds us in *Producing Good Citizens: Literacy Education in Anxious Times*, citizenship and its training "[communicate] the ideals of [a] nation, but also its anxieties, particularly in moments of political, cultural, and economic uncertainty" (1). At

the heart of Life Adjustment were not only the questions of what a citizen ought to know and how he ought to learn it, but also who a citizen ought to be and how he ought to live his life.[4]

The growth, strength, and increasing symbolic importance of capitalism in the postwar era influenced the answers to those questions. According to Life Adjustment, high school students, on the verge of adulthood and active citizenship, needed to know how to find and maintain satisfying and profitable work; how to manage their personal finances; how to responsibly access community financial resources; how to make smart and efficient purchases; and even how to spend their free time. One section in the bulletin on "Citizenship Education" accounted for various aspects of civic life, including interacting with government agencies, keeping up with current events, and engaging in political action towards solving public problems. That section also listed the importance of "the capacity for sustained hard work" under the rubric of "living democratically" (United States 58). Economic knowledge and participation were described broadly throughout the Life Adjustment literature, though laboring, it became clear, was one of the most important duties of the citizen. The Life Adjustment bulletin, in fact, argued that "[l]ife adjustment [was] impossible unless *occupational* adjustment occur[red]" (83,

---

[4] Much of the language surrounding Life Adjustment assumes a male student/citizen: a gendered and public figure, an enterprising representative of and provider for the self and the family, an embodiment of the things that make America good and strong. This gendering remains, in spite of the fact that Life Adjustment billed itself as a movement attentive to inclusion, individual contributions, and individual development. Female students/citizens are occasionally mentioned in Life Adjustment texts, most often as the second half of the pair "boys and girls," which appears 17 times in the *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth* bulletin. (The pairing never appears in the reverse order.) Three references exist to girls alone: a report from the subcommittee on "Teaching and Learning Experiences and Activities" describes girls alone in an account of "pre-vocational experiences for girls, such as maid, waitress, clerk" (32); another section describes how "[m]any girls, and a few boys, are in home economics classes" (68); and a call for special "programs for girls who are or who will soon be full-time homemakers" (65) is recommended. I have preserved this gendering not as an endorsement of it but as a reminder of whom Life Adjustment imagined itself serving.

emphasis mine). For the movement, occupational adjustment meant exposing students to opportunities "[t]o learn to work through getting a job, holding a job, working, earning, learning, and growing on the job"; "[t]o learn to get along with people through taking directions, meeting responsibilities, [and] developing work habits"; and "[t]o gain knowledge of problems of labor and management, problems of business safety, and problems relating to industry, business, and agriculture" (*Life Adjustment* 84). Citing an article entitled "What the High Schools Ought to Teach," the Commission on Life Adjustment explained that education and employment shared the goals of preparing the next generations and securing the future:

> By the time a young person reaches adolescence he needs to have opportunities for work if he is to make the transition into adulthood rapidly and efficiently. The payment of wages to young people for the labor which they perform contributes to economic adjustment. Wages are a means additional to schooling of inducting young people into adulthood. … A democracy will not separate its work and culture. (qtd. in United States 85)

The notion that wages contribute to the work of "adjustment," the shaping of youth into citizens, suggests how intertwined democracy and capitalism were in this vision and in this historical moment.

Life Adjustment emphasized the link between citizenship and labor, but its economic focus stretched even beyond school and the workplace, offering guidance for students' home lives and leisure time. The home, proponents argued, mirrored the larger community, such that democracy at large became dependent on "[t]he ability to maintain democratic relationships in family life" (United States 63). A democratically

successful home was an economically sound one. The Commission insisted that "[s]tudents must gain … [t]he ability to buy wisely within the limits of family income," along with "[t]he ability to resist the propaganda, high-pressure salesmanship, and trickery which [kept people] in perpetual debt" (United States 63). Although its origins trace back to the late 1930s and the Educational Policies Commission (United States 63), "consumer education" became an important part of Life Adjustment. Consumer education prepared student citizens to spend their money and their free time thoughtfully. An educated consumer would "develop a philosophy of life and a discriminating sense of values which would guide his expenditures"; "learn to shop effectively, but economically, and use well what he has bought"; "acquire competence in financial management"; "gain a basic understanding of the operation of the economy as a whole, and of the conditions necessary to its progressive improvement"; and "acquire … wholesome attitudes" about money and goods (United States 76–7). Strikingly, these objectives acknowledge some of the dangers for individuals living under capitalism: debt, predatory lending, dishonest salesmanship, hyper-consumerism, wastefulness. Rather than functioning as a critique of capitalism, however, the assertion serves to reinforce the necessity of the Life Adjustment project, one which pumps good-hearted and well-prepared citizens into the world and prepares the more vulnerable citizens for what awaits them. In other words, Life Adjustment takes capitalism as a given, and through its educational innovations, it promotes and perpetuates capitalist logics, values, and social orders.

Life Adjustment made the case that together labor and consumption would occupy much of an adult citizen's life, and that for a citizen to find "satisfaction" in that

life, he needed to be competent and comfortable with both. Occupational adjustment offered students scaffolded exposure to long work hours and a variety of work conditions, preparing them for what might prove to be an overwhelming and burdensome work life. Likewise, consumer education warned young people of pitfalls of the consumer market. Work and consumer smarts got sold through this form of education as points of pride; to be good at work and happy as a worker, and to make wise financial choices for oneself and one's family were pitched as skills which one ought to feel positive about mastering. That contentment served as evidence of a good American living the good life. Being an ideal, well-adjusted citizen, a good worker, and a shrewd consumer thereby merged practically and affectively, and the whole assemblage was subsumed under the umbrella of the high school curriculum.

A Close-up on Affect in/as Education

The dispositions and habits Life Adjustment promoted were distinctively affective—pertaining to the intensities, energies, feelings, and impulses generated through the friction of being and doing. As I alluded to in the introduction, there is no singular, universally accepted way to think, talk, and write about affect. Affect, Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg note, is immediate and evanescent (1). Affect includes impulses, motivations, drives, lulls, and suspensions (1). Affect is sensation, and it is also shared and relational, a way to name the frictions produced in the processes of cohabiting with other bodies. Affect is additive and dynamic, always in motion.[5]

[5] While debates exist about whether affect and emotions are different—affect is sometimes thought of as precognitive or extra-personal whereas emotions are socially mediated and individually specific—many scholars of affect are most drawn to affect because it is "rangy" (Seigworth). There is amongst many affect scholars less interest in what affect is or is not, what it comes before or after, and more interest

Seigworth and Gregg argue that affect not only moves in space but also can move other bodies. In that sense, affect is persuasive. Affect is also pedagogical. Lauren Berlant's and Sara Ahmed's work illustrate the ways that affect orients us to the world. Through our repeated experiences of affect, we build habits and orientations toward and patterns for existing in the world (Berlant 15). Ahmed argues that feelings direct us toward objects and are therefore "directive" (219). Berlant calls this learning-through-living an "education in attunement" (158).

Neoliberalism is perhaps unique in its efficiency in spreading economic logics beyond economic spheres. That efficiency can be credited, at least in part, to affect and the affordances for affect's movements in a system whose boundaries blur and fold into one another. According to Catherine Chaput, neoliberalism "governs our everyday activities through an embodied habituation" (4), challenging the effectiveness of rational deliberation. Because instinctive behaviors, or affects, guide neoliberal life, Chaput maintains, argument is likely to fail. After all, she remarks, neoliberalism has not "crumble[d] under the deliberative weight of better arguments or more information" (8).

The role of affect and emotion in disseminating the logics of capitalism, however, is not unique to this latest form of political economy. That is to say, earlier forms of capitalism have also been effective at teaching people what the system "wants" of them. The Life Adjustment texts offer us evidence of this kind of teaching predating neoliberalism. In them, preparation for good citizenship is tied up with financial and

---

instead in what it can do. As Seigworth notes in the inaugural issue of *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry*, affect studies embraces the vast possibilities of and for affect as a phenomenon in action, an object to study, a theory, a methodology, and more; where affect studies says "'non-'[, it] says 'not only this but more,'" and where it says "'pre-'[, it] maintains, over and over again, 'yes and … yes and … yes and …'" (iv).

emotional solidity. Life Adjustment defined for students a range of acceptable affective responses to everyday American life. It taught them not just what they ought to do but who they ought to be, for themselves and for one another. Much of this work of helping students habituate themselves to the postwar period's specific brand of capitalism and democracy fell under the English curriculum in Life Adjustment.

English: An Education in Empathy and Experience

Life Adjustment reformers saw something special in English and the relationships it cultivated with students. As George Robert Carlsen, a Professor of English and Education, put it, "[i]t is relatively significant that many English teachers ultimately become the counselors and personnel workers of the schools, for the nature of their subject, if well taught, leads them to a real concern with the problems of the individual" (88–9).[6] He opened his chapter from the 1950 text, *Education for Life Adjustment: Its Meaning and Implementation*, with two anecdotes. The first told the story of a young disabled girl who began to "understand [her]self" after reading the "whimsical autobiography … of an amputee" (88). The second concerned a boy who "grapple[d] with the problem of explaining why the experience [of climbing a mountain behind his home] meant something to him" through his writing (88). "More than many other subjects in the curriculum," Carlsen insisted, "English seems peculiarly adapted to helping young people adjust themselves to their condition as human beings swallowed

[6] This comment is telling too for its glimpse at the labor—especially potentially unpaid, gendered, emotional labor—expected of our colleagues in this moment. As scholarship in our field has demonstrated, this way of reading the work of teaching English, and of teaching writing in particular, has persisted. For more, see Eileen E. Schell's *Gypsy Academics and Mother-teachers* and Susan Miller's "The Sad Women in the Basement."

by an unknown universe" (88). Making sense of the world and the self through literacy practices was understood as an affective project, and not strictly a cognitive one. Finding one's place meant not getting lost in uncertainty and, as with Consumer Education, not getting chewed up by a potentially hostile world.

A list of the "Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools" appeared in a 1942 issue of *The English Journal.* While the article just precedes the Life Adjustment movement, it foreshadows the intertwining of affect, economics, and citizenship that got picked up in the latter reform. The article situates the building and maintenance of social bonds in language use, asserting that "*[l]anguage is a basic instrument in the maintenance of the democratic way of life*" (Anderson et al. 40, emphasis original). Language is praised for its expressionistic capacities, as it allows "young people [to] develop power to order their own thoughts carefully and to give effective expression to them in the daily relationships of life" (41). It is not, however, exceptional in mediating social interactions: "Important also are sincerity, restraint, courtesy, and a sense of responsibility for clarity and precision of expression as aids to mutual understanding" (41). The reference to emotional stability here is subtle, but the sentiment is clear: social literacy exceeded language use, and grammars of social exchange facilitated emotional experiences amongst people, building social bonds. Language mattered in Life Adjustment to the extent that it oriented students to a community's common sensorium.[7] Rhetorical experiences—or at least the sincere, restrained, courteous, and responsible ones—were designed and assigned to promote stability at a personal level and empathy in service of social stability.

[7] I borrow this term from a conference interaction with Tim Jensen, who shared findings from his current manuscript, *Our Common Sensorium: Rhetoric, Pathé, and Movements of the Social*.

Experience was an important and effective way of modeling, coaching, and disciplining affect in Life Adjustment, and in the English classroom more specifically. The "Basic Aims" document made the case that "*English enriche[d] personality by providing experience of intrinsic worth for the individual*" (Anderson et al. 52, emphasis original). Individual constancy, bolstered by a strong sense of self-worth, was encouraged through heartening, affirming literary and rhetorical experiences. Social stability was also cultivated through inclusion of mass media, which proponents believed would enable "common language experiences" (47) and structured shared social experiences in the English curriculum. The curriculum also emphasized writing in the vernacular and the production of everyday genres like letters (42), both for their functionalist advantages (students would frequently need to speak "common" English and write letters, after all) and for their value in building and maintaining a solid communal identity. These literary and rhetorical experiences seem abstract, but reform proponents argued that they should be implemented in the most realistic and concrete ways possible. Authenticity and applicability became something akin to assessment measures for Life Adjustment. Eurich, in discussing "Our Responsibility for Youth," argued that experiential opportunities were "not just hypothetical worlds to conquer"; rather, "[s]uch opportunities are the life blood of democracy" (141).

Portrait of a Life Adjustment Program

These curricular prescriptions and declarations of educational values offer us some insight into what Life Adjustment was about, but they fall short of showing us what a school nourished by "the life blood of democracy" actually looked like. Fortunately,

some on-the-ground accounts of Life Adjusted high schools exist to bring the movement into clearer focus. One such report, presented at the 1951 NASSP by T.H. Broad, Principal of Daniel Webster High in Tulsa, Oklahoma, described “What the Large High School [Was] Doing About the Program of Life-Adjustment Education.” Broad detailed the various ways in which young people at Webster High were given increased freedom in managing their own lives in exchange for increased responsibility for themselves and their school. Many of the reforms at Webster High started just before Life Adjustment, when “faculty began to study the community, the pupils[,] and the purposes of high school” (181) in 1939, one year after the school opened. World War II, Broad noted, “brought a greater concern about the problems which were real to the pupils,” and led to additional “curricular and instructional study and revision” (181–2). At Webster High, “[t]eachers assumed the role of friend and counselor—guiding the experiences of the pupils” and “helping pupils organize their experiences so that learning takes place” (182). A course of electives, ranging from arts to vocational classes to study hall time, was created for freshman (182). Something called “Senior Core” replaced a portion of the final year of study for graduating students, giving them space for “personal development, occupational orientation, family-life education, sex education, community orientation, consumer education, and orientation to college”; no grades were awarded in that program (183). Clubs and other activities were altered to be less competitive, more exploratory, and more inclusive by eliminating awards. Additionally, Broad explained, administrators granted students access to school facilities without supervision and for extended hours, stopped the ringing of school bells, permitted students the right to smoke on campus, created opportunities for students to share in school governance

through student councils and advisory committees, made it easier for students to define and change their class schedules throughout the year, and eradicated both final exams and detention (183–4). Students at Webster could plan and venture out on field trips alone, in and out of town (184); find employment in the office, in the bookstore, and on the custodial staff (181); and work off the cost of student activities (184). Webster High also created partnerships with local businesses to employ students off campus and arranged for students to earn credit while they worked (182).

Webster High, according to its principal's report, was likely not an average but rather an exemplary site of Life Adjustment. Through its curriculum, its internal organization, and its relationship to the community, it curated a porousness between the school and the world outside of it. In doing so, it declared and enacted its trust in its students. It sought to treat them as adult citizens in a safe, free, and frankly idyllic space. Life Adjustment at Webster invested in youth with the expectation of long-term community security as a return, earning the buy-in of young people to a vision of American civic life that involved tending to one's own personal (and financial) well-being so as not to jeopardize the social (and financial) well-being of one's community. Using experiential learning and opportunities for structured and supported forays into adult life, Webster set out to prepare young people for inheriting, and even building, that world. In this way, Webster High's empowering and inspirational interpretation of Life Adjustment both relied on and showcased the best and most attractive possibilities of capitalism. It offered a secure space for vocational, personal, and social risk-taking; it was forward-thinking in a way that promoted individual and group development; it surrounded students with a mutually respectful, supportive community; and it blunted

the potentially vicious edge of competition in favor of personal satisfaction, cooperative activity, and peaceful cohabitation.

Throughout Life Adjustment, stability was the predominant ethic, and security, its affective component, animated much of the reform. Investments in stability drew attention to individuals' interdependence in a democratic and capitalist society. Buell G. Gallagher, the Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Education Program Development and Coordination Branch, stated it plainly: "The intimacies of modern living leave no interstices" (*Life Adjustment … Culture* 13). The Life Adjustment bulletin put it in more economic terms: "In a land where every man influences more and more the conduct of the political economy, every man is willy-nilly a practicing economist. Granted that he cannot be made an expert one, it is desirable that he gain a certain perspective and good judgement" (76–7). Life Adjustment, with its anxieties about change and its efforts to prepare young people vocationally and ethically for the future, emphasized community under capitalism.

At times, however, it seemed that Life Adjustment struggled to find the trust in others required for this vision. One of the controversies surrounding Life Adjustment came from its name: what, or perhaps who, needed to be adjusted for this chapter of American life? According to many advocates, the "adjustment" of Life Adjustment referred to shifting curriculum to make it more relevant and useful to a greater number of young people, but others insisted that the program actually intended to adjust young people to new economic and political demands. In this reading, a distrust in students motivated the reforms, and students, not the curriculum, were to be adjusted to fit the ideals of an American society. A section of the bulletin focused on "Work Experience,

Occupational Adjustment, and Competencies" noted that "the boys and girls with whom the resolution is concerned are likely to need resourcefulness and flexibility in order to achieve occupational adjustment" (84). Youth here were deficient, ill-equipped to inherit or build the future. *Constructing a Culture*, a recent Scalar webtext by four visual media scholars, supports this reading of Life Adjustment. The project revisits the postwar moment in the U.S. to consider the emergence and management of youth and the role of media and visual culture in that work. Teenagers, the authors contend, emerged "as a new class of people" in this historical moment, amidst the "homogenization, blandness, and conformity" of the developing American suburbs, and "were viewed as a 'threat'" (Kudlik et al.). They argue that Life Adjustment "was a coercive movement that tried to guide teenagers into pre-determined societal roles through therapeutic education," one that "worked under the assumption that the American way of life did not need adjustments" (Kudlik et al.) and only students did.[8]

Contemporary critics of Life Adjustment were also doubtful of its intentions and abilities to prepare young people for a changing world. In their critiques of the reform, they called it an insult to young people, to education and educators, and to democracy in general. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., one of the movement's loudest and most prominent detractors, accused Life Adjustment of being no less than anti-intellectual, anti-democratic, and anti-American. He referred to its progressive educational goals as examples of "regressive education," and argued that "[r]egressive education is a

[8] The authors of *Constructing a Culture* comment too on the economic interests of Life Adjustment, reading it as a project to "instill maturity in the nation's youth to resist Communism." They also identify the movement as, if not causal at least correlative with, the impulse to see schools "run like a business to help support the industrial economy of the U.S." Such an expansion of economic organizations and logics to noneconomic, and often public, spaces is a common critique of neoliberalism.

monstrosity in the literal sense of that word. It consists in the abnormal development of certain features of the school program and the withering away of other and more important features" (qtd. in Wraga 188). He argued that these changes brought education outside of the appropriate realm of the school and disrespected the students it aimed to empower. For Bestor, the responsibility of the school was "intellectual training, in every field of activity where intellectual effort is an important component, and for every citizen who is capable of applying, and willing to apply, intellectual means to the solution of the problems that confront him" (Bestor 417). Bestor argued that a truly inclusive democratic education would not aim to "'adjust' some three-fifths of our children to the bitter fact that they are good for nothing but undesirable, unskilled occupations" (420); in other words, a truly democratic and inclusive school system, for Bestor, would not meet students at the place of deficiency it imagined they were but would challenge them to meet the school at the same place it expected all students to be. He lamented that "[t]he 'mud-sill' theory of society ha[d] come back with a vengeance and likewise the good old argument that schooling for the ordinary man must teach him to know his place, to keep it, and to be content with it" (421).

Bestor was not alone in his distaste for Life Adjustment. Another contemporary critic, Charles Tonsor, argued that Life Adjustment was gimmicky but dangerous. He believed education had always been about guiding and preparing young people for life, noting that "[i]f Socrates were not teaching for life adjustment, it is hard to say for what he was teaching" (92). For Tonsor, Life Adjustment education ignored the core of life for which students ought to be prepared: "[T]he life-adjustment school … pushed out the classics for 'life adjustment'" when "[o]nly the material things have changed—autos

instead of horses, railroads and trucks instead of camels. But the crooked tax collector is still with us, and the tax-hungry government that bled its citizens white finds an exact counterpart in our age. Likewise, the civilization that wrought its own destruction by constant war and training for war" (92). For Tonsor, the human condition persisted, and consequently, time-tested educational practices and values ought similarly to persist. Like Bestor, Tonsor sensed something fundamentally undemocratic and even unethical about the program, suggesting that under Life Adjustment, "[t]he children [became] the guinea pigs of pedagogical experimentation without any qualms of conscience concerning the wreck or ruin that may be of their lives" (92). Historian V.T. Thayer, reflecting on Life Adjustment years later, summarized the critiques of Bestor, Tonsor, and others, describing the movement as "a Hydra-headed monster," which took "subjects of study once considered basic in the training of the mind" and morphed them into "subjects the contents of which are channeled into the direction of immediate life applications"; the result, critics argued, "centered not upon the development of understanding but upon the 'conditioning' of students in … 'the minutiae of daily living'" (Thayer 251).

In still other critiques of Life Adjustment, the reform did not express a universal disrespect for or skepticism of *all* youth but rather singled out particular subsets of youth who it imagined needed adjusting. Prosser's Resolution, the very claim that sparked the Life Adjustment movement, called attention to the fact that the majority of young people were being left behind by traditional high school curricula. The idea that Life Adjustment could benefit everyone persisted throughout the reform's texts, though within them, some slipperiness remained between the idea of empowering *all* youth and

safeguarding society against the threats that *some* youth posed. Attention frequently turned to the "sixty percent" of young people who would not go to college or into specialized careers. At moments in the bulletin, references to these students segregated them from *all youth*. A section on "Consumer Education," for instance, read,

> These are the youth who, lacking the poise and confidence of the more fortunate, will be most exploited by unethical vendors. It is they who, frightened by the marble façade of the bank which might serve them, will turn from it to support the high-rate lender and the loan shark. They, above all others, will lack the funds and the nerve to enforce at law their legitimate rights. Furthermore, these are the citizens who will likely have least financial margin for error. (76)

The bulletin outlined here the distinguishing characteristics of this "at-risk" group of young people. Not only did their socioeconomic point of origin leave this group an insufficient safety net, but they were also likely to have had insufficient personalities for good capitalist citizenship. Insecurity and timidity, traits attached to young people's social statuses, could compound their financial difficulties. The result would be a social problem more than an individual one: because of the number of "educationally neglected youth[,] … they make the majority of American homes. It is these young people, therefore, who chiefly determine the quality and strength of our national life, since in a democracy, the family 'holds first place as the creator and guardian of human values'" (United States 61).

In this light, Life Adjustment's contradictions emerge. On one hand, Life Adjustment was a progressive and student-centered initiative designed to help every

student make for himself the life he wanted. On the other, Life Adjustment was a conservative and protectionist initiative designed to preempt the potential damage caused by an influx of new and potentially volatile players on the economic scene.

The Politics of Context

Life Adjustment circled uneasily around the label of progressive education. It shared much with the progressive education tradition, including its emphasis on experiential learning, attention to education's relationship with civic and democratic life, interest in individualized instruction, and imagining of an alternative teacher-student relationship. Despite these similarities, a critic of Life Adjustment would be more likely to align the two movements than one of its advocates. Indeed, the reform movement seemed especially resistant to aligning itself with John Dewey's late-nineteenth century, capital-P Progressive Education Movement. Dewey considered students social beings and believed that education should reflect social life. He argued that the promotion of individual success and satisfaction ensured the well-being of a democratic community and its futurity as a whole. In *The School and Society*, Dewey writes,

> [a]ll that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. All its better thoughts of itself it hopes to realize through the new possibilities thus opened to its future self. *Here individualism and socialism are at one*. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself. (20, emphasis mine)

Dewey's claims about progressive education would likely have been received very differently by his audience in 1900 than similar claims would have on the eve of the Cold War. The historical conditions in which Life Adjustment developed help explain why few, if any, connections were drawn by Life Adjustment proponents between the reform and Dewey's Progressive Education, a program that aimed to unite "individualism and socialism." These tensions offer too one explanation for why Life Adjustment has not persisted in popular memory the way that earlier Progressive Education movements have.

For educational historians, Life Adjustment remains an important touchstone in the twentieth century. In fact, according to William G. Wraga, it is "the curriculum reform effort that historians love to hate" (185). Wraga argues though that what historians understand to be true about Life Adjustment is often actually false. For example, while Charles A. Prosser is often remembered as the person who shepherded Life Adjustment into being, he may have played a limited role in the movement. The movement, which garnered harsh criticism and provoked ongoing debates, may also have had limited reach and funding, even in its so-called heyday. For Wraga, this false legacy is a problem of historiography, the "misuse of historical sources in post-1980 discussions of life adjustment education," and of language, mischaracterizations of the nature of "adjustment" across the reform (196–7). In short, Life Adjustment got lost in the commotion because it was so easily swept up in, and by, politics.

It is possible that Life Adjustment remains relatively unfamiliar (and relatively under-researched, at least in our field) because it was mostly inconsequential. But Wraga's work suggests that the movement might have also been eclipsed by a round of

political tug-of-war. In that reading, it seems doubly important that we recover it. Wraga sees the mishandling of Life Adjustment's history to be a "missed … opportunity to inform current reforms" (203). His critique invites a pause for reflection in our own moment, as neoliberalism seems to be encroaching so fast on our work that we can hardly keep up with it. What *is* neoliberalism? How does it move us? What can we learn about it by approaching it from another angle, by, for instance, reframing it in a longer history of capitalism?

Conclusion

Individualism, diverse and flexible work experiences, a fast-paced sprint towards the future, an emphasis on creativity and innovation: these tropes, rampant in Life Adjustment, seem to be plucked directly from neoliberalism, despite predating the neoliberal economic turn by over two decades. These similarities ought to remind us that neoliberalism is not just the name of a new and powerful force but also the latest iteration of a familiar system whose legacy spans over a hundred years. In re-grounding neoliberalism in its economic timeline, I do not intend to flatten its idiosyncrasies,[9] nor do I mean to suggest that there is nothing to gain from attending to the specific texture of the neoliberal world. Rather, I move in this chapter to recapture the things that we might already know about neoliberalism and to rediscover struggles with capitalism we have already overcome that might get concealed by neoliberalism's perceived novelty.

In *Writing Neoliberal Values*, one of the neoliberal critiques I reference in the introduction, Rachel C. Riedner reads the genre of human-interest stories as affective

[9] For a detailed description of what makes neoliberalism distinct, see Paul Treanor's "Neoliberalism: Origins, Theory, Definition."

“fictions of everyday life [that] validate and create consent for neoliberal culture and political economy” (xiii). She locates within them “ghostlike” wisps, “brief, ephemeral discursive moments … that exceed neoliberal narrative [and] can be rewritten to track production of consent for neoliberalism and … point to rhetorical possibilities” (xiv) outside of it. Though I am interested here in a postwar curricular reform effort and not a textual genre, I approach my object as Riedner does hers, searching it for insights about how political economy inserts and asserts itself in social life and seeking out possibilities to respond to and live in it differently.[10] Life Adjustment can read like a cautionary tale about a progressive education project being overrun by capitalism. But it also reveals to us its ghosts, glimpses of practices and places that exceed capitalistic values. Webster High—a community that emphasized interdependence over self-reliance and promoted experimentation without the rhetoric of risk—is a haunted place in this regard. We may not want to resurrect these ghosts, but we can learn from them. How might we as rhetorical educators reclaim the affective spaces of our classrooms? What sorts of literate practices might we deploy to overwrite the familiar script of competition in our classrooms? How could we restructure our curricula to create a space where students can explore what it means to rely on others? These explorations will not beat back neoliberalism in our educational spaces, but our odds are certainly better with the ghosts on our side.

[10] This approach borrows too from other feminist scholars, including Shari Stenberg, who advocates for feminist repurposing in response to neoliberalism, and Nancy Welch, whose book *Living Room* reminds us that by reengaging with rhetorical interventions from the past “we can teach and learn the attitudes, relationships, and practices that are the preconditions for imagining oneself and others as … agents of social change” (15).

CHAPTER THREE

Reading Between the Lines:

What Culturally Engaged Composition Textbooks Can Tell Us about Youth

In the previous chapter, I considered how, in the boom years after World War II, a specific brand of economic optimism, patriotism, and faith in democracy fueled progressive educational reforms like Life Adjustment. Those reforms, and that boom, were short lived. The encroachment of Cold War anxieties, a shift to a post-Fordist form of capitalism, and mounting political tensions around the heterogeneity of the American population soon edged such reforms out of national favor. The expansion of neoliberal practices around the globe in the 1980s and the 1990s found the U.S. at the heart of a different sort of economic rally; as David Harvey writes, by the end of the millennium, major world powers might as well have said, riffing off President Nixon's 1970s proclamation about Keynesianism, "We are all neoliberals now" (13).

The decades between these high points in the history of American (and global) capitalism also saw composition as a discipline take root, itself "an effect of the conflicting economic, political, and ideological forces coming together in the crucible of class struggles in the U.S." (Zebrokski 246). From critiquing error-marking and the remediation mentality in first-year writing courses and exploring the expressive potential of writing (without teachers, even), compositionists began theorizing writing not as a product but as a process. Amidst the Culture Wars and the growth of neoliberalism and informed by the development of cultural studies in the U.K., composition leaned into its *social turn*, emphasizing the local and social nature of communication and attending to

the *always already* ideological dimensions of language and language use. Scholars in the field began studying not only how the teaching of college writing is influenced by these larger social and historical conditions, but also whether it should, and how it might, respond to them.

In this chapter, I tap into this rich moment in the histories of capitalism and composition at the end of the twentieth century by reading three widely adopted, multi-edition composition textbooks. I approach these textbooks—*Common Culture: Reading and Writing about American Popular Culture*, *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*, and *Media Journal: Reading and Writing about Popular Culture*—as sites of rhetorical education. The three texts, first published in the mid-1990s, all fold popular culture into the composition classroom, though each offers a different pedagogical angle into the material. As I read these textbooks, I consider what they, as curricular tools and as market commodities, might tell us about our field's investments in (and assumptions about) youth—our students.

Textbooks and Composition

Before digging into these specific textbooks though, I want to take a broader look at textbooks and our field's relationship with them. From a political economic point of view, the textbook industry is an easy target for critique. Textbooks are expensive, compulsory commodities. They are designed for limited-term use: texts are regularly made obsolete with the release of new editions, often at the direction of publishers with profits in mind and not at the behest of student or teacher demand. Beyond their commodity status, textbooks have attracted much attention from composition scholars.

Articles, essays, and edited collections exist which praise textbooks, critique them, explore their production and politics, and track how they get used. This attention can be explained, in part, by “the ambivalent location [textbooks] occupy in the discipline” (Micciche, “Review” 220). Textbooks are not only widely written about by composition scholars but also widely used in composition classes. Scholars and teachers of college writing generally agree that composition textbooks should be written by our field’s experts and should reflect our field’s latest research; textbooks that “natural[ize]” outmoded ideologies about writing have come under harsh criticism (K. Welch 271, 274; Christenbury and Kelly). Still, textbooks are not often legible as serious scholarly work and, accordingly, are not often counted toward tenure. In a recent edited collection on *(Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks*, James Thomas Zebroski suggests that textbooks are such complicated objects because they “are representations—of a variety of things, to be sure—from guiding epistemologies, concepts of process, teaching practices, even social relations” (“Textbook” 232). To understand them, he argues, “we need to move beyond studying what and how a text[book] represents” and contextualize it instead “within the discourses that produce [it] and the power strategies … that put into motion and constitute [it]” (232).

In a 1994 article published in *English Journal*, Leila Christenbury and Patricia P. Kelly explore how and why textbooks get used. While their study focuses on middle and high school classes, their speculation about textbooks’ popularity amongst teachers can also describe the relationship of composition teachers—especially lecturers, adjuncts, or professors with heavy teaching loads—to textbooks. They assert that textbooks serve teachers as they are designing and structuring their courses because they address a

number of financial demands on teachers: teachers, after all, do not often have the luxury of time (let alone paid time) to develop curricula, and reproducing materials outside of a textbook can be cost prohibitive, especially in tight economic spaces. Textbooks and the "power in those bound books" (Christenbury and Kelly 77) lend a degree of authority to themselves and the teacher who assigns them to students, other teachers, administrators, parents, and other stockholders in education. Textbooks offer the "convenience" of a "one-stop shopping" experience, "defin[ing], codify[ing], and organiz[ing]" information all at once (77), but they also can function as silent partners in the classroom. While they can support a teacher's pedagogy and a student's learning experience, they can also be selectively ignored, talked back to, analyzed and dissected. Zebroski, for example, describes assigning "as traditional a textbook in writing as exists … *not* as the typical extension of instruction or as a compendium of exercises to be assigned and completed in a linear manner throughout the term, but as itself a rhetorical act both in and about language, open to a rhetorical reading and critique" ("Textbook" 232, emphasis original). Textbooks seem to provide sturdy scaffolding, some flexibility for those who want it, and legibility and credibility where needed. The appeal of textbooks, then, is not hard to grasp.

Nonetheless, not everyone is sold on textbooks, as published criticism of them makes clear. Some scholars are skeptical of textbooks because they seem to flatten knowledge and restrict possibilities in the classroom. Mike Rose, for example, has argued, "we have good reason to suspect that knowledge of any complex process—like knowledge about composing—cannot be adequately conveyed via static print" ("Speculations" 208). Whereas textbooks can certainly describe writing and provide

examples of good writing, as printed (static) media which aim to explicate (and therefore simplify) ideas, some scholars find them to be especially ill-suited for the task of teaching writing, which is concerned with “highly complex and ‘open ended’” problems (210). Textbooks, these critiques maintain, speak to an imagined and universal ideal of a learner, though “[h]uman beings don’t internalize a complex process identically”: “[B]y their very nature, texts can perhaps present a method, but they cannot represent all of the possible ways each one of us makes that method work” (210). Christenbury and Kelly, even while praising the convenience of a textbook, concede that “in its very effort to define and codify—one of the tasks of textbooks—it limits and often, in fact, misleads. In language arts, facts are slippery things; a textbook, through its organization and surety, implies an order to literature and to questions of language and writing which can be highly misleading” (80). Kurt Spellmeyer has argued that textbooks’ static nature edits out a key part of composing and learning: failure. He writes,

> [r]eal questioning can end in failure, as everyone who has done it knows. … Some questions simply don’t have answers; and, as we learn through failure, some undertakings are simply destined to fail. One might even say that learning how to ask questions is learning how to fail—how to get lost, how to be confused, how not to know. But textbooks exist primarily to push this experience of “not knowing” as far as possible to the periphery. (47)

The completeness of the textbook seems to be both a foundational feature and an inescapable flaw of the medium, according to Spellmeyer, who concludes that “[t]here is

simply no way to mass-produce genuine insight over the course of a fifteen-week semester" (47).

Critics have noted still other ways that textbooks might limit teachers and students in the writing classroom. Christenbury and Kelly note that textbooks weigh students down—both literally (79), as students lug dense books around, and figuratively, through their perceived prescriptiveness. While textbooks need not be consumed uncritically and wholeheartedly, as Zebroski demonstrates ("Textbook"), in presenting students with select readings and methods to students, they have the potential to communicate one "basic lesson": "that each of us needs to think in perfect unanimity with everyone else, and especially with the professor" (Spellmeyer 58). Spellmeyer argues "that the textbook reifies in an almost invisible way a distinction between experts and laity, allowing the expert to seize the producer's role while relegating the laity to the role of passive consumers" (49). Here, textbooks imagine students who need to learn the material as both laypeople and passive consumers. Spellmeyer puts this sentiment succinctly when he notes that what students "will remember [from their textbooks is that] … knowledge comes from somewhere else—and from someone else" (48). Textbooks, in this account, do not empower students to produce knowledge but rather ask them to collect and keep it. Understandably, then, students do not have a place in the textbook. While textbooks are produced *for* students, students are often absent *in* textbooks altogether, a fact with which some critics have taken issue (Salvatori and Donahue).

Textbooks, critics argue, can also be ideologically dangerous. From their place of perceived authority, they might be read to advocate for a particular perspective through

which students should engage the world. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some scholars have found that textbooks "[construct] and [normalize] a particularly white, upper-middle-class subjectivity" (Miles 29) and "reproduc[e] … certain normative cultural assumptions" about sexuality (Marinara et al. 272). The privileging and even endorsement of such a subjectivity might exclude, isolate, or discourage students in our increasingly diverse classrooms, and, perhaps more detrimentally, limit possibilities for thinking about and producing new knowledge. Other scholars have noted how textbooks similarly constrain teachers, especially new ones, as they communicate a limited, normalized vision of writing and the teaching of writing (Spellmeyer 233–4). Their effect overall in a classroom can be one of de-socializing the space (Miles 30; Spellmeyer 59), as textbooks aim to manage controlled exchanges between teachers and students and emphasize individual (but still not individualized) learning experiences.

Who or what is to blame for textbooks' shortcomings is also hotly debated. Some point to shifts in the publishing industry which stripped the control of editorial management away from experts and put it in the hands of profit-hungry shareholders (Mortensen), or to complexifications in the legal side of the business that reduced the amount of control authors have over their own work (Winterowd). Other critics suggest that market demands are at fault: perhaps publishers produce conservative materials so that "writing teachers will know and feel comfortable with" the textbooks (K. Welch 275).

What is indisputable about textbooks is that they have become a popular object of scrutiny in our field. Libby Miles, borrowing the phrase from John Trimbur, describes the abundance of critique about textbooks as a "rhetoric of deproduction," and laments the criticism- and skepticism-fueled despair it encourages. Importantly, there is nuance

in the research on textbooks, and skepticism about all of this skepticism. A number of scholars highlight what it is that we don't, and perhaps can't, know about how textbooks actually get used. Christenbury and Kelly report that most teachers acknowledge using textbooks as a starting point but also refuse to relinquish their autonomy in the classroom to a text (78). In her review of *(Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks: Conflicts of Culture, Ideology, and Pedagogy*, the aforementioned edited collection by Xin Liu Gale and Frederic G. Gale, Laura Micciche argues that the research about textbooks "create[s] a monolithic view of textbooks as instruments of dominant culture and neglects to examine fully the extent to which teachers strategically use textbooks instead of being used *by* them" (220–1, emphasis original). Her critique applies to research on textbooks found outside of the book as well. Even where teacher agency is taken into account by critics of textbooks, a distinction gets made often between what "good teachers" (Rose, "Speculations" 211) might do in the classroom with a textbook and what other—new, inexperienced, poorly trained, or otherwise lesser—teachers might do. Micciche suggests that we need to learn more about how students actually feel about their textbooks: "Do student experience textbooks as oppressive, monolithic, and rule-governed? What is the view of writing impressed on them through years of schooling and years of reading textbooks?" ("Review" 225). That sort of ethnographic work, while beyond the scope of this project, would indeed bring important insights into the conversation about textbooks and their "worth" in the composition classroom.

Student Agency, Cultural Studies, and the Teaching of Writing

Though the scholarship I describe in the lit review above mostly talks about textbooks in a general way, much variety exists amongst them. While different in their organization and methodologies, *Common Culture*, *Signs of Life*, and *Media Journal*—the textbooks I focus on here—share some key features that make them interesting to read alongside one another. Each was first published in the mid-1990s and has enjoyed a publishing run beyond a first edition. *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life*, in fact, are still in print today, in their seventh and eighth editions, respectively.[11] As indicated by their subtitles, all three textbooks bring popular culture as objects of study into the composition classroom, orienting students as readers and writers to those objects.

Although these texts emerged in the nineties, composition and pop culture were in conversation long before the wave of culturally engaged writing textbooks which hit the marketplace in the 1990s. In a 1976 issue of *English Journal*, professors Marjorie Smelstor and Carol Weiher proclaimed that "[t]he popular culture revolution [was then] upon us" (42). They described "anthologies, journals, and college classes about popular culture hav[ing] sprung up at epidemic rates" (42). While the incorporation of pop culture into the writing classroom was not yet a part of an explicit political project, Smelstor and Weiher explain that neither was it purely topical: "It is not necessary to merely embellish a composition course by introducing isolated examples of popular art; an entire course devoted to thinking about the underlying purpose and structure of various kinds of popular culture can introduce students to the strategies of forceful, well-planned

[11] *Signs of Life*'s ninth edition is set to be released later this year.

communication” (42). Smelstor and Weiher devote most of their essay to illustrating how a composition instructor might fold advertisements, television and film, newspapers, and magazines and bestsellers into their curricula, though they also make a case for the worthwhileness of a pop culture–infused writing pedagogy: such a practice, they insist, “may solve some of the old and new problems composition instructors are facing: the alleged decline in writing skills, frustration with traditional approaches, inability to think and hence to write, fear of self-expression” (46). In the late 70s, pop culture was hot, and, they argued, it would be “foolish not to capitalize upon this experience” (46). Twelve years later, in the same journal, Roslyn Z. Weedman made a similar case, arguing that “[t]he accessibility of primary resources to students and to ourselves, the desirability of encouraging students to come to terms with their own authority and experience, and perhaps even the obligation to understand the countless images confronting us daily are all sound reasons to bring a theoretical interest in mass culture into the composition classroom” (97). Moreover, Weedman offered, pop culture might help students feel more motivated and engaged in their requisite writing courses, an added benefit teachers ought not to underestimate (97).

Around the same time that these scholars were advocating for the inclusion of pop culture studies in writing classrooms, a more formal academic study of popular culture, cultural studies, was developing in the U.K. Most often associated with the Birmingham Centre and its long-time director Stuart Hall, cultural studies gained traction in the American educational context in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Building from Marxist critique, “cultural studies [took up the struggle] to comprehend, take stock, address and critique the debates on how to grasp the problem of culture” (Cruz 262).

What this meant for the academy was an intervention in the existing "epistemological order of things" and an "[experiment] with pedagogy" (263). Scholars and teachers played with "ways of rethinking the knotty relations that manifested as culture and culture's embeddedness with the problems of how history, social formations, economies, politics, ideologies and regimes of power were complicit in, and constitutively involved, the sprawling terrain of institutions and the state" (263).

This iteration of pop culture study took up a distinctly political project, "emerg[ing] out of the post-war/Cold War, mid-century upheavals in which major transnational political and ideological realignments were in movement" (Cruz 262). When this theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical approach reached the U.S., it swirled with distinctly American social, cultural, and political upheavals. Cultural studies was embraced by "[s]tudents and younger academics [who] welcomed the fresh critique and the attention to critical problems that came with the newly-expanding theoretical struggles" and who recognized the fields' "relevance to confronting ossified institutions and entrenched and guarded epistemologies, and the intellectual and theoretical reflections that it fostered for understanding everyday life" (286).

By the 1990s, when the textbooks I am interested in here entered the marketplace, the idea of a cultural composition course was well established. Julie Drew, writing in *JAC* in 1999, put it this way: "I am not interested in asking whether some enterprise called 'cultural studies' should be embraced or rejected by compositionists; that question is vague and the time to ask it, even in a subtler form, has passed. We are already there" (412). For Drew, the coming together of composition and cultural studies—facilitated by Jim Berlin, Diana George, John Trimbur, and others—is "a

project that makes sense" (412). After all, "cultural studies has multiple historical, theoretical, and material interests for composition," including "a tradition of engagement with leftist politics, a preoccupation with popular texts and languages, an often ill-defined position within the academy, and an abiding interest in the ways in which the everyday is pedagogical" (411). Other scholars have traced the coming together of composition and cultural studies through "affiliations with the liberatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the work in critical pedagogy by scholars such as Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, Peter McLaren, and bell hooks," noting the fields' shared "interest in emancipatory social practice, in understanding schooling as part of an ideological apparatus, and in developing pedagogies that value students' culture and recognize their social identity and integrity" (Wilson, Herndl, and Simon 95).

Not all scholars shared Drew's sense of composition and cultural studies as inevitable bedfellows. Greg Wilson, Carl G. Herndl, and Julie Simon, writing a review essay on four cultural studies-related books in *Composition Studies*, argue that though "cultural studies is an increasingly influential element in composition studies," this pairing is not "a natural or straightforward one" (94). While the authors ultimately celebrate cultural studies' "commitment to everyday culture and its importance, and ... [the] belief that students can articulate their place within [that culture]" (106), they gesture toward what was, and what remains today, a lively debate in the field about the coming together of cultural studies and composition.[12] Lending his voice to that position,

[12] An earlier version of this chapter began with a survey, circulated on the WPA-L, in which I asked composition teachers and WPAs to comment on how they use popular culture, and young adult literature more specifically, in their classrooms and programs. One respondent replied that s/he does not use pop culture in the classroom, despite having done so twenty years ago, because "[r]esearch shows that teaching themed courses will distract students from learning how to write and then transfer those skills to other disciplines" and her/his experience has proven that "students are reluctant, even resistant to talking about writing and rhetoric" when they can talk about the pop culture texts instead (Lee).

Victor Vitanza, for example, argued in his 1998 CCCC address that cultural studies demands "'cynicism and fascism'" from students and treats them both as "'objects' and 'products'" (qtd. in Drew 411). Dale Jacobs critiqued the political agenda of cultural studies, noting "the all-too-easy slide from emancipation to manipulation within critical pedagogy" (qtd. in Wilson, Herndl, and Simon 95). Others echoed this concern, suggesting that what some perceive as cultural studies' goal of "radicaliz[ing] a student audience" (Grant 527) might be at odds with composition's pedagogical objectives. Susan Miller argued that cultural studies diverts attention away from writing (qtd. in Drew 411). And still others expressed skepticism of cultural studies' "coloniz[ation of] the spaces young people maintain and the cultural practices they create apart from school" (Grant 527). Gordon Grant, a proponent of cultural composition, nonetheless wondered whether cultural studies might be incompatible with what he identified as composition's "typical institutional context," wherein an instructor "has to teach often unmotivated students about the exigencies of academic or professional or civic discourse" (525). Teaching "in a cultural composition classroom full of conservative students who maintained a pretty thoroughly instrumentalized notion of writing (in institutions that supported these already constituted subjects)" (528), Grant laments that "[s]tudents just don't get—or more likely, don't want to get—the ideas about the politics of culture and the politics in culture that I try to make visible to them" (527).

One issue lurking in these debates is that of student agency in and outside the classroom. What does it mean to teach composition? Who are our students, and what do they need from us? Are the ways that composition and cultural studies imagine students compatible? What is it that writing teachers imagine students need to

learn—"'how to read, write, and think'" (qtd. in Wilson, Herndl, and Simon 105); how to "claw their way into the American dream" (105); how to make thoughtful choices as a worker or consumer (as with Life Adjustment); how to recognize the ways they are oppressed by capitalism; how to overthrow the political economic system? Where do these objectives come from—a teacher's personal agenda, his or her academic training, or students' themselves? Do composition teachers imagine students as reluctant, bored, or even resistant learners, or do they imagine students as engaged and active participants who themselves have something to teach? Textbooks, and specifically culturally engaged composition textbooks, can offer us some insight into these questions. They also present an opportunity to consider how textbooks as a genre imagine students, and whether the figure of students implicit in the genre is consistent with these pedagogical projects. While composition textbooks are big business, they are also carefully crafted and ambitiously designed by our colleagues. While they have been rigorously critiqued, they have also served students and supported new teachers in important ways.

Textbook Youth: Three Case Studies

In what remains of this chapter, I add to critical conversations in our field about textbooks and cultural composition, resisting the impulse to make more "deproductive" rhetorical noise. I approach *Common Culture, Signs of Life,* and *Media Journal* not with an eye toward critique but with a sense of openness and curiosity, exploring how youth are represented in each textbook's reading selections and what kinds of engagements each book structures for students. Through these readings, I work to uncover some of

the investments, assumptions, and values about students that we subscribe to in our field and that get infused into the pages of our textbooks. Building from my analysis in the previous chapter, I pay specific attention to the ways that youth are figured in relation to their political economic moment.

Common Culture

In 2012, Pearson published the seventh, and most recent, edition of *Common Culture*, alongside print and digital versions of an Instructor's Manual, and an access code for students to MyCompLab, an online writing instruction companion featuring tutorials, practice exercises, tips and strategies, and links to a variety of resources. According to the instructor-facing preface printed in the textbook, *Common Culture* aims to "cover a full range of topics in the field of popular culture from a variety of theoretical perspectives" (xi). The authors, Michael Petracca and Madeleine Sorapure, note that they use pop culture because it is "appealing for students and effective in improving [students'] critical thinking, reading, and writing skills" (xi). Thanks to the intrinsic interest pop culture offers for students, they insist, teachers need not "'sell' the subject matter of the course" to students and can instead focus on "teaching students to think critically and to write clear and effective prose" (xi). Despite acknowledging students' experiences with pop culture, Petracca and Sorapure note that "few [students] have directed sustained, critical thought to its influence or implications" (xi); once they are introduced to the critical thinking methods of the textbook, however, the authors find that "students enjoy the opportunity to articulate and argue for their own interpretations of objects and institutions in the world around them" (xi). The text, then, promises a

relatively painless curriculum for teachers, a critically productive apparatus for students, and a clear pathway toward improved writing competencies. An introduction chapter orients them to the textbook, and chapters on advertising, television, music, technology, sports, and movies follow. Petracca and Sorapure open each chapter with a relevant image and their analysis of it, orienting readers to the seven or so collected essays on the chapter's topic. Questions and prompts follow each individual reading, and broader prompts round out each chapter.

Common Culture takes as its starting point the idea that young people—and people of all ages, for that matter—are subjected to and manipulated by popular culture. In a particularly ominous opening to the introductory chapter, the authors write,

> [W]e spend our lives immersed in popular culture. There's no escaping it. … Television, radio, newspapers, and magazines shape your ideas and behavior. … [P]op culture is part of your learning environment, supplying ready-made images, ideas, and patterns of behavior that you draw from, consciously or unconsciously, as you live your daily life. Exactly how you learn and just what you learn may not be all that certain, but it is undeniable that popular culture is one of your most powerful teachers. (1–2)

Young people, the book maintains, must learn to think critically about the culture they swim in so that they can identify how they are pushed and pulled by the endless tides of cultural products, all thoughtfully designed to influence them under the guise of entertaining them: "Analyzing pop culture … allows you to begin to free yourself from the manipulation of the media; it is an important step toward living an examined life" (5).

Through a critical approach to pop culture, the authors argue, we can "find out about ourselves" (5) and, ultimately, "determine for [our]selves the role of popular culture in shaping society and in shaping [us] as … individual[s]" (6). While the stated primary objective of the textbook is to help students produce better writing, the textbook also works toward a goal of student self-determination.[13]

Although we are all, regardless of our age, subjected to the influence of popular culture, *Common Culture* emphasizes through its reading selections the particular vulnerabilities of youth. The introductory chapter, for example, walks students through "An Active Reading Casebook," focusing on "Three Selections About Barbie" (8). Petracca and Sorapure explain that they "begin with a look at Barbie because of her longevity, popularity, and cultural significance" (8), though it is noteworthy that the doll's primary audience is impressionable young children. "For three decades, girls (and curious little boys, as well) have been playing with and learning from Barbie," the authors write, "and thus, she serves as an important force in conveying cultural values and attitudes" (8). The first selection about Barbie questions the prejudices about race and gender that get packaged with the doll and her accessories, and the second addresses the question of whether Barbie works for or against feminist causes. The third selection lays out the negative lessons Barbie teaches to children, and to young girls in particular: "Through playing with these dolls, children learn to act out in miniature the way they see adults behave in real life and in the media," the author of the essay writes; "The dolls themselves and the accessories provided for them direct this play,

[13] That the first essay in the collection makes the argument that our shared culture is more like a cult is telling in this regard.

teaching children to consume and conform, to seek fun and popularity above all else" (qtd. on 17). While Petracca and Sorapure do not dwell on youth's specific susceptibilities to this sort of social manipulation, children nonetheless get figured as blank slates; these tiny consumers soak up that which their toys feed to them. Elsewhere in the book too, *Common Culture*'s authors hint at the special attention that should be paid around issues of young people and media. In the introduction to the chapter on popular music, for instance, Petracca and Sorapure note that "[s]ome observers see this phenomena [of music 'constructing' subjectivities] as potentially dangerous since it encourages people—especially young people—to transgress the boundaries imposed by civilized society" (203). This remark suggests both a worry about youth (They are so impressionable!) and a potential celebration of them (Who else will question and push the status quo?).

The authors of *Common Culture* demonstrate a degree of trust in young people throughout the text. They include daring reading selections and are open about not wanting to censor the book in content or in style. In "The Year Hip-Hop Invented Sex," a reading from the music chapter originally published in *Bitch Magazine*, the essay's author explores how popular rap and R&B songs from 2009 shifted artists' boasts from the ease with which they could seduce women and the number of women they could have sex with to how much they could satisfy their female partners. The author cites graphic sexual lyrics about oral sex and the female orgasm throughout the essay, tracing this evolution in braggadocio and speculating on where the trend will go next. Petracca and Sorapure prompt readers in their introductory headnote to this article to consider how the language affects them: "[D]oes it shock you, put you off, or make you

wish more researchers penned and/or typed their tomes with such lively diction and graphic frankness?” (225). They do not apologize for or warn readers about the content that is to come. They do, however, give their readers a peek into the editorial decisions they made in including the piece in the discussion question section that follows it:

> We have never had an article that was quite so graphic and explicit as this one, and we—both authors and editors—went back and forth about the propriety of including it in the latest revision of *Common Culture*. In the end, we decided that it was smart, articulate, and definitely presented a coherent, focused, and well-supported point of view that had great potential for generating stimulating animated class discussion and lively writing in response. (233)

Petracca and Sorapure lay their own textbook out as an object of study here, calling attention to the constructedness of the text and inviting students to see the book as available for critique. The follow-up exercise, though, is more limiting:

> For a brief writing exercise, assume the role of a television or movie script writer and write two pages of dialogue in which authors and editors sit around a conference table and debate the merits of including this article in their popular and universally beloved and respected textbook. (233)

While Petracca and Sorapure offer a window into editorial work, they invite students only to imagine themselves observing it and not to participate in the discussion or influence its outcome.

The authors’ trust in youth is illustrated elsewhere in the text too, though it is occasionally at odds with the perspectives of the authors they include in their collection.

The first reading in the music chapter, for example, is a blog post written by a Brooklyn-based hip-hop artist named J-Zone. The piece stands out for its decidedly non-academic style. Describing the alleged death of hip-hop, J-Zone writes that "[i]f u agree with [him] that's cool" but that "no matter your opinion, somebody will tyrannically oppose and get all fuckin emotional" (qtd. on 206). His style is uncensored, off-the-cuff, and unpolished. Petracca and Sorapure preface the reading, describing the evolution of the "Web log." They justify their decision to include the piece by arguing that "[t]he blog must increasingly be considered as a legitimate literary subgenre" (205). It is significant that they offer students this type of reading, both as an object to respond to and as a model. In archiving the blog here, they demonstrate their willingness to engage emerging technologies and validate the web 2.0 world students are likely to feel comfortable in. And while J-Zone is not a young person himself (the artist is in his 40s), he writes unlike the other adults collected in the text. Interestingly though, J-Zone is frustrated with young people in the rap scene, and his essay comes off as nostalgic. He complains that today "[i]t's no longer about how dope you are, it's who you rollin with and who's cosigning what you do" (qtd. on 207). He tells the story of "[s]ome kid from over here" (qtd. on 208) eager for fame who stops him on the street to ask him why he won't rep his neighborhood like 50 Cent does. He expresses his annoyance with what he calls "junior high shit," like "[p]eople leaving threats and talkin shit via MySpace, people getting hurt over e-beef at shows, kids on message boards flexin muscle and actin hard" (qtd. on 212). While J-Zone's style is less conservative and conventional than other authors, his message is perhaps more conservative and conventional: back

in his day, things were better; kids these days don't know real hip-hop, and they're making the scene worse.

Much attention gets paid in *Common Culture* to how and what young people are consuming, and their unique consumption activities is at times what distinguishes the youth demographic. The television chapter, for example, includes a series of essays about the rise of infotainment television programs, Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* in particular, and the influence they have on young people. One essay glosses statistics about young people "get[ting] more of their news about politics and current events from late-night television than … from the news media" (qtd. on 179). The author of this piece exposes the various myths about youth and politics that have developed as a result of that research—youth care more about being entertained than being informed, they can't distinguish between news and commentary, they are disengaged from politics, they don't understand the political process, etc.—and offers a different reading of young people's watching habits: *The Daily Show* offers young viewers information *and* access to an angle of critique that makes them more informed and more engaged than they might otherwise be. The author defends youth against negative stereotypes by defending the media they, according to studies, prefer. Similarly, a reading in the popular music chapter focuses on young people's consumption of hip-hop. Petracca and Sorapure introduce the piece by noting that "[n]o one would deny that rap culture enjoys unprecedented popularity among young people" (234). The essay itself explores the assumptions black college professors make about young black students because of their interest in or involvement with hip-hop. The essay ends with one professor's warning: "Young people need to ask themselves, 'Who will control their identity?' If they

leave it up to the media to define who they are, they'll be devastated by these images. … That's where hip-hop is killing us" (qtd. on 241).[14] Petracca and Sorapure ask students to reflect on their "experience[s] as … member[s] of the hip-hop generation (even if [they're] not … rabid fan[s] of hip-hop)" (242) in the discussion sections that follow the reading. Though the important takeaway Petracca and Sorapure hope to communicate to young people is that they need to be in control of their own selves and their own self-definition, generalizations about each generation's media preferences, appear to have already defined the textbook's readers.

The essay that follows the reading about hip-hop and black college students describes changes in the record industry, questioning the role of A&R men and other record executives now that algorithms can better predict hits than humans and filesharing has decimated record sales. The essay's author tells the story of an eighteen-year-old French Jewish girl, Cherie, who aspires to be a pop star. The label which has signed her sees her "youth and obscurity" (qtd. on 252) as assets for promoting her. At one point in the essay, the author describes a marketing meeting wherein a team strategizes about "blowing [Cherie] up"—making her a superstar (qtd. on 253). They discuss which of her singles to release when before they move on to "imaging" her; they decide her aesthetic will occupy "a middle ground between Britney

[14] While *Common Culture* does not dwell extensively on youth, pausing on the category only to single them out as particular kinds of consumers or to gesture toward their unique impressionability, the text here moves even more quickly over the question of race. The authors emphasize our shared cultural products, the ways that we are all subjected to "training" by those products, and the importance for all of us to recognize and defend ourselves against that training. There is some deeper attention to race in the chapter on movies, where the authors focus on two directors, Judd Apatow and Tyler Perry. The critique about the passing over of race can also be applied to this dissertation. I focus on tracing the figure of youth through different scenes of rhetorical education; there are opportunities for me or other researchers to pay more attention to how race plays into the various imaginations of youth, what those interactions say about access to rhetorical education in these scenes, and how racial politics influence our teaching and students' learning.

Spears and Shania Twain," and they pick out her first photoshoot wardrobe (qtd. on 254). After her career takes off, they agree, they will send her on Oprah with her "story line": an account of her synagogue in Marseilles being burned down. They will "pitch her as an artist who has suffered violence in her life as a result of her religion" (qtd. on 255). The account adds a different sort of urgency to *Common Culture*'s claims about young people being "made" by popular culture. Here, readers witness one girl's life not formed by commodities but as a commodity; she is edited, framed, and produced to sell records, which will in turn "sell" particular images and values about Cherie, femininity, and the world more generally to young listeners.

Another essay collected in the text takes dramatizing the stakes of living and being in the world as a young person to a different level. "The Boy Who Died of Football" (396) follows the story of a kid whose obedience to the adults around him ultimately kills him. Ever dutiful, the boy pushes himself to the ultimate physical limit at the direction of his high school football coach. He runs and runs until he finally collapses from heat stroke and ends up hospitalized. At the story's end, the boy, in a partial coma, wiggles his toes when the nurse tells him to and struggles to hold on even while blood pools in his mouth and tears stream down his cheeks. It isn't until his mother gives him permission to let go that he finally passes away (412). Giving over total control of your life is fatal, the story seems to warn readers. Take back control; start making yourself now.

It is not entirely clear, though, how young people can gain (or regain) control of their own lives and identities. They can learn to read critically, practice defending themselves against media manipulation, and learn to write more elegantly about their

insights. How this might lead to them changing the conditions which exploit and manipulate them is less obvious. In another essay in the sports chapter, “Fixing Kids’ Sports” (380), the author explores the problems of hyper-competitiveness, poor sportsmanship, and overuse injuries in kids’ sports leagues. Things get better, as the title suggests, but it is an adult who saves the day by creating training protocol for coaches and writing guidelines for appropriate adult behavior at children’s athletic events. No essay tells the story of young people solving problems or otherwise participating in social change.

While Petracca and Sorapure, and the authors of the collected essays, talk *about* youth throughout most of *Common Culture*, they do include one young person’s voice in the text, in the form of a student’s writing samples. The examples, housed in the book’s introductory chapter, walk readers through the writing process. Collected are the student’s annotations on a poem (10), her early prewriting work (11), a summary of her annotations (11–2), a free write (27–8), a brainstorm cluster (28) and outline (29–30), her thesis statement (31–2), a body paragraph draft (34), a draft of her conclusion (35–6), and her full and final essay draft (43–5). The student’s essay is formatted like the other readings in the text, printed in the same small font and deep indent, and it is attributed to the author (and listed in the table of contents) as the other reading selections are. In this way, Petracca and Sorapure demonstrate how they mean to take the student writer seriously.[15] The student essay responds to the prompt, “What do you see as the significance of the Barbie doll in contemporary American culture? How are your ideas related to those … in the selections presented here?” (21). Interestingly, the

[15] The essay is not, however, included in the Index by Author and Title at the back of the book.

response is framed by a kind of accounting of the author's own experience with Barbie and the gender expectations Mattel projects through her. In this way, it exemplifies the kind of critical self-awareness the authors praise earlier in the introduction.

In contrast, at a few points in the text, Petracca and Sorapure talk *to* their young readers. These addresses, while presumably intended to be lighthearted and friendly, paint students in an unflattering light. In a headnote for a reading on popular music, for example, the authors write, "While we won't divulge the details of [the reading's author's] solutions in this headnote (if we did, then you wouldn't bother to read the article, would you?), we will promise that his solutions are reasonable and compelling" (268). A headnote for an essay on a chapter about television asks readers if they've ever been scolded by their parents for watching too much television and suggest that they marshal the article into their next defense (131). The authors' comments suggest an image of their young readers as hesitant students, bratty kids, couch potatoes. This image is at odds with the student example, which shows how diligent students can be.

Common Culture creates many opportunities for students to participate in a conversation about popular culture; well over three hundred questions and prompts, in fact, pepper the textbook's pages. Most of the writing prompted by the text falls in line with the goal of helping students take control of their own identities by developing critical self-awareness. The majority of the "Examining the Text," "For Group Discussion," and "Writing Suggestion" questions included at the end of each reading—and the "Additional Suggestions for Writing" prompts at the end of each chapter—emphasize critical reading and response, staying local to the texts. Often, these questions and prompts encourage students to apply methods of reading or to test arguments made in a reading

against examples they find on their own. Occasionally, the questions and prompts invite students to produce something other than a critical essay. One question encourages students to interview fellow students about their political participation and report about it (167). A few questions ask students to make a presence for themselves on the Internet in the form of a blog (213, 357).

Other questions from the text ask students to imagine themselves as decision makers. At the end of the advertising chapter, for example, a question asks students to imagine themselves as advertising agents: “Devise your own ad campaign for a product with which you’re familiar, including several different ads, each appealing to a different audience. … Finally, design the ads and briefly explain the reasoning behind each design” (113). Similarly, at the end of the reading about the changing music industry, the future of A&R men, and Cherie, the authors ask students to “[i]magine [they] are … record label executive[s] faced with declining sales of CDs as a result of downloading from the Internet” and to “[w]rite a letter to the *New Yorker* magazine in which [they] defend recent efforts to sue networks like Napster as well as individual heavy users of file-swapping networks” (267). And after another essay in the popular music section on “How to Save the Music Business,” readers are encouraged to take positions as recording artists, music industry executives, and management persons, and to “attempt to come to some agreement about some concrete ways to improve the financial situation of the recording industry to the benefit of all three contingents” (275). In each of these role-playing exercises, students are given a chance to be influential themselves, always by taking on the role of a media manipulator. They are asked not to talk back to the systems that they are told control them but rather to take control of

those systems. The questions prepare students to inherit positions of power, not to challenge the system which bolsters that hierarchy. In another prompt, also from the end of the advertising chapter, students are asked to imagine themselves as different kinds of rhetors: citizens. The prompt reads, "Imagine that you are a member of a citizens' group working to improve the quality of advertising. What specific recommendations would you make and what standards would you want to see enforced? Illustrate your ideas with ads you can find that either meet or fall below these standards" (113). Even in this thought experiment, popular culture is the agent of social change; citizens can, at best, work with producers of pop culture to "improve [its] quality."

Common Culture is a text with specific and cohesive objectives. Those objectives include promoting critical thinking, convincing students of the need to be critically savvy, and encouraging students to practice articulating their critiques, most often in the form of an academic essay. While Petracca and Sorapure demonstrate some trust in their readers and take students seriously as subjects with the potential to take control of their own writing, identities, and, perhaps someday, the media industries, the textbook does not figure students as agents of political change. Pop culture here calls the shots. As the text suggests that young people might someday shape pop culture, it becomes the task of the college composition classroom to prepare students with transferrable rhetorical skills that they might use as they venture beyond the academy to build their, hopefully influential, careers.

Signs of Life in the U.S.A.

The eighth edition of *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.*, by Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon, was published by Bedford/St. Martin's in 2015. Since its first publication, a new edition of the text has been released approximately every three years. The eighth edition was also offered as an eBook, a first for the textbook, and, like *Common Culture*, it shipped with a digital companion that included online resources, tutorials, quizzes, and bonus readings. The similarities between *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life* are noteworthy. Each begins with a message for instructors and follows up with an introductory chapter (chapters, in the case of *Signs of Life*), which orients student users to the book. Each breaks down reading and writing skills and offers strategies for active reading, prewriting, critically reading images, and drafting. Each includes student examples and model arguments; provides headnotes before each section and each reading; and concludes each reading with comprehension questions and response prompts. Both discuss citational practices and offer mini-citational style guides: *Common Culture* glosses MLA and APA; *Signs of Life* covers only MLA but includes three critical essays that highlight changes in students' citational habits (which I discuss more below) and current debates about online research. These similarities might be chalked up to genre features; after all, this sort of guided instruction is part of what we expect a writing textbook to include. Other similarities gesture to the texts' shared cultural milieu and similar world views. They each cover advertising, television, movies, and technology. They each take up Barbie as an object of study in their introductory chapters. And, oddly, they both use the analogy of "rose-colored glasses" to describe cultural influence. *Signs of Life* departs from *Common Culture* in features and form,

however, with its bolded vocabulary words and its glossary, which collects and defines words related to the book's cultural semiotics approach ("abduction," "denotation," "mythology," "overdetermination") and academic conversations more generally ("class," "Eurocentric," "postmodernism").

Whereas *Common Culture* takes a more general "critical reading" approach to pop culture, *Signs of Life* is built around semiotics. The textbook introduces students to semiotic analysis to help them gain a critical grasp on the culture around them which might otherwise seem natural. This interpretive approach, "explicitly designed to analyze that intersection of ideology and entertainment" (vi), helps students make sense of the world and amass evidence to support their claims about it through popular culture. Pop culture, according to *Common Culture*, controls much of young people's lives; in *Signs of Life*, it "permeates about everything we do even as it reflects back to us what we are becoming as a society and who we are" (v). While pop culture is inescapable (7), *Signs of Life* figures it as only part of a larger system that shapes, limits, and defines contemporary life. Whereas Petracca and Sorapure use authorial interventions primarily to introduce topics and readings to students, the authors of the *Signs of Life* offer their own complex and pointed readings of the world (they call these "model interpretations" (viii)); the same is true of the readings collected. However, Maasik and Solomon insist that semiotic analysis creates space for opposing and contradictory interpretations (18–9), allowing students to talk back to the various readings and the textbook in general. In introducing semiotics to students, the authors offer a brief academic history of the practice of reading and decoding signs. They begin with Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure in the nineteenth century,

trace the expansion of structuralism to popular cultural signs through Roland Barthes, and connect this evolution to the cultural analysis practices of Stuart Hall (9–11). Through this narrative, the authors fold young people into the story. They give young readers access to ongoing conversations and live debates about culture through semiotics by "catching them up," and they encourage them to think about how they are constructed in relationship to this academic history: what is the work they are being asked to do, how does it relate to patterns of thinking and reading and "decoding" they already do, and what is its relationship to academic disciplines?

The ultimate goal for young people in *Signs of Life* is not to seize control of their own identity production or of the machinery of pop culture. In *Common Culture*, identity production is the battleground, and the right and ability to define oneself, rather than letting pop culture direct one's path, is the ultimate prize. In *Signs of Life*, however, identity production is more complicated; it isn't just television, movies, ads, and clothing that shape you, Maasik and Solomon argue, but also your social class, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, family, and education. The authors encourage young people to think of their identities as products of signification ("[Y]ou make your hairstyle into a sign that sends a message about your identity" (7)), and they acknowledge that "[h]uman beings … construct their own social realities, so who gets to do the constructing becomes very important" (18). But *Signs of Life* offers a rather complex account of how that construction happens. One included reading emphasizes the specific difficulties of thinking about identity in the age of social media. "Straddling Online and Offline Profiles, Millennials Search for Identity" describes a crisis young people themselves report experiencing. Accustomed to tailoring their identity and

curating it across various platforms, some millennials feel like they don't have a sense of who they are at their core (500). The process of becoming, arguably the work of youth, is complicated by parallel developments in technology, cultural expectations, and social habits.

Rather than helping students to identify moments of media manipulation, Maasik and Solomon privilege the project of historicizing cultural products and tracing the evolution of dominant cultural mythologies. Their objective for students is to similarly be able to contextualize and historicize themselves, their lifestyles and practices, and other cultural objects. This emphasis begins early on. In the first chapter, the introduction to pop culture and the semiotic method, Maasik and Solomon fit pop culture itself into a longer historical arc of cultural developments. They discuss the convergence of folk culture and mass culture, citing how changes like the Industrial Revolution and urbanization in Europe and the U.S., corporate capitalism, and the introduction of electronic technologies into everyday life made possible the pop culture landscape we inhabit and structured our relationship to it. As a result of these changes, they argue, "we are, in effect, constantly being trained to be the sort of passive consumers who keep the whole consumer-capitalist system going. Without that consumption, the economy might totally collapse" (5). Their comment both models the type of work they will ask students to engage throughout the textbook and makes a contextual and theoretical case for the kind of pedagogy they offer students.

Through this approach, the very idea of youth itself gets historicized and abstracted. In the introduction chapter, Maasik and Solomon offer a reading of the rises

and falls of zombies, vampires, and androids in pop culture. Through this case study, they expose the constructed nature of youth culture. They argue,

> until the latter part of the 1960s, fantasy stories in America ... were regarded as kid's stuff: something for B movies, comic books, Sunday matinees, and children's literature. Literary realism, on the other hand, was for grown-ups. … But with the appearance of Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* in 1966, along with the popular revival of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *The Hobbit* at the same time, the hierarchical relationship between realism and fantasy began to change. Add to this the appearance of George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and the makings of a cultural revolution were at hand, a revolution that was sealed in the 1970s with the enormous successes of George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). Suddenly fantasy wasn't mere kid's stuff anymore. (13)

The "values of youth culture" ("a preference for prolonging childhood and clinging to the physical appearance of being young" and "a desire to maintain the tastes of childhood" (14)), according to the authors, "provide an alternative to the realities of adult life" (14) in twentieth- and twenty-first-century, middle-class America, with its particular expectations for domestic arrangements, capitalist productivity, and rational sensibilities. Youth and its trimmings here are explored as cultural phenomenon; while young people may identify with youth or youth culture, they are also asked here to interrogate the category. A later essay, collected in the movies chapter, makes a similar move, destabilizing the concept of youth and youth culture. The essay, presumably about teen movies, makes an argument instead about the adults behind their production. The essay argues that

writers and directors of films about high school politics, likely once high school nerds themselves, project their over-dramatized memories of cliques and social isolation into their creative work. They craft plots wherein underdogs like themselves can take revenge on the terrible popular people. "Youth culture" is revealed to be a manifestation of adult bitterness or nostalgia; youth is defined in past tense, in relation to other personal and cultural storylines.[16]

Whereas *Common Culture* emphasizes the consumer tendencies of youth, plucking young buyers out of market circulation to study them, *Signs of Life* focuses on how young people are plugged in, networked, and inextricable from their cultural world. In "For Students in Internet Age, No Shame in Copy and Paste," an essay included in textbook's chapter on citation, the author argues that upticks in cases of student plagiarism across the U.S. might be explained by considering youth, and youths' values, at this nexus of cultural, technological, and historical conditions. He writes that "the internet may ... be redefining how students—who came of age with music file-sharing, Wikipedia and Web-linking—understand the concept of authorship and the singularity of any text or image" (qtd. on 63). At the same time, "undergraduates are less interested in cultivating a unique and authentic identity—as their 1960s counterparts were—than in trying on many different personas, which the Web enables with social networking" (qtd. on 64). The essay situates young people and their habits in a larger history, one colored

[16] The only reference to actual young people in this essay is an uncomfortable one. The author of the essay wonders whether the high school caricatures in the teen movie genre (for instance, the mean popular blonde and the meathead jock bully) "might have been figures in the minds of the Littleton shooters, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold" (qtd. on 367) when they murdered their classmates at Columbine High School. "The irony," the author argues, "is that Klebold and Harris ... seemed to have forgotten how the plot turns out. If they had held on for a few years they might have been working at a hip software company, or have started their own businesses. … [G]eeks rule" (qtd. on 370).

by cultural beliefs, technological innovations, and more. In so doing, it responds to a perceived deficit about youth through this characterization.

In the advertising chapter, an essay called "Selling to Children: The Marketing of Cool," explores the evolution of the idea of cool and its effectiveness as a marketing strategy for young consumers. The essay historicizes coolness, but it also explores how, through coolness, the "cultural authority" marketers enjoyed "has virtually disappeared" (qtd. on 221). Rather than "consumers eagerly look[ing] to [advertisers] to learn what to wear, eat, drive, and value," coolness facilitates a "feedback loop" wherein advertisers must "figure out what people already value and let those findings direct ads" (qtd. on 221). What is significant about young people in this schema, the essay maintains, is that they recognize their role as cultural influencers: "[T]hey know advertisers are relying on them, and consciously play to their influence" (qtd. on 221). Youth here is defined by the demographic's savvy, one which evolved alongside marketing shifts, economic growth, and industry changes. The idea of youth is figured in flux, as part of a moving dynamic.

A noteworthy feature of *Signs of Life* is that within its essays, young people do some of the talking. The textbook features three complete student samples. None of the three readings is shown "in progress," as was the lone example in *Common Culture*, but all are annotated with Maasik and Solomon's paraphrases of key sections and comments on rhetorical moves the student authors make. The student authors are referred to by their first names rather than their last names, but, as with *Common Culture*, the student authors are included in the table of contents.[17] The three essays in

[17] In the table of contents, each essay is designated as a "[STUDENT ESSAY]" (xvi)—in brackets and all caps.

Signs of Life are also indexed in the back of the book. It is in the chapters on technology ("The Cloud: Semiotics and the New Media") and identity ("My Selfie, My Self: Ma(s)king Identity in the New Millennium") though that young people get the most air time. The first essay in the technology chapter explores young people's attachment to short and simultaneous media, suggesting that they are "media rich" (like kids in a candy store; qtd. on 395–6). Despite their preferences for it, the author argues, multitasking may not produce the conditions for young people's optimal functioning (402). The essay describes young people's habits, observed and self-reported, thereby giving young people an opportunity to speak for themselves. Another reading laments the fact that "American college students today are addicted to media" (qtd. on 403). The study at the center of this essay comes from a university class that asked students to forgo electronic media for twenty-four hours and record their experiences. Much of the insight about young people offered in this reading comes from their own notes and journals. A third essay in the tech chapter explores the social connotations that motivated users to choose between Myspace and Facebook in the early 2000s. In the essay, various young people are quoted as they describe which service they prefer and why; the analysis offered by the author highlights the relationship between their choices and issues of social class, mobility, geography, and prestige. While the analysis is offered by academic experts, the data is provided by young people. Young people get to define themselves, their interests, their habits, and their feelings.

Young people are also directly addressed in *Signs of Life*. Maasik and Solomon make it clear that they think of young people as experts in the subject matter of their own experiences and in popular culture: "Your own expertise in popular culture means

not only that you may know more about a given topic than your instructor but that you can use that knowledge as a basis for learning the critical thinking and writing skills that your composition class is intended to teach you" (7), they tell students. Elsewhere they assure students that "[w]hether or not [they] are familiar with [semiotics], [they] already practice sophisticated semiotic analyses every day of [their] lives. Reading this page is an act of semiotic decoding (words are signs that must be interpreted), but so is figuring out just what a friend means by wearing a particular shirt or dress" (9). The authors of *Signs of Life* occasionally make asides to their readers, as did the authors of *Common Culture.* One parenthetical attempts to level with students in a lighthearted way: "(Tell the truth now: Do you ever tweet, or post something to Tumblr or Instagram, during class?)" (6). Another advises students to "keep in mind" what they read in the textbook about multitasking "while studying for finals" (393). These comments demonstrate a different kind of relationship Maasik and Solomon hope to build with their readers. Where Petracca and Sorapure assume their readers might be bored by the text and looking for excuses to avoid reading it, Maasik and Solomon represent student distraction as less of an offense. Where Petracca and Sorapure come off as scolding their television-watching readers, Maasik and Solomon offer research-inflected advice. Still, despite the textbook authors' best efforts to engage their audience on equal ground, occasional references to clichés about youth persist in the readings. In one essay, for example, the author embarrassedly describes "some vestigial adolescent need to feel [him]self ahead of the crowd" (qtd. on 418). A journalist, writing in her commentary about online trolling, exasperatedly reminds people on the Internet that "[w]e're all adults" (qtd. on 422). An English professor, describing the archetype of the

"outlaw hero" notes that this hero's "childishness and propensity to whims, tantrums, and emotional decisions [are derived] from America's cult of childhood," and that "official heroes [embody] the best attributes of adulthood: sound reasoning and judgment, wisdom, and sympathy based on experience" (qtd on 451).

With its emphasis on system-level thinking, archetypes, and history, *Signs of Life* seems less interested in the specific nature of young people's lived experiences, and their media and pop culture consumption than does *Common Culture.* The chapter on consumerism features readings on competitive consumption, how home shopping networks changed the cultural and community significances of shopping; retail anthropology; materialism and the self-storage industry; stores using cellular data to "track" shoppers; package design; and advertiser's commodification of dissent. While there is an occasional reference to young shoppers or youth-oriented brands, the chapter focuses on historicizing consumption in a more general way. Similarly, the advertising chapter mentions a youth market, but most of the readings—which cover desire and advertising, consumer categories, gender and advertising, representations of the female body, sex, and green advertising—refer to youth only in passing as an occasional example, if at all. The television chapter covers reality TV, the tug-of-war between traditional family values and feminist interventions, the popularity of ironic humor, and representations of "class justice" paid to wealthy characters. An essay about *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*, which follows a child beauty pageant contestant and her mom/manager, explores how the show fits into a larger genre of "hillbilly" entertainment rather than focusing on Honey Boo Boo's age. An essay about *Girls*, Lena Dunham's HBO hit which follows four upper-middle-class, 20-something millennial

women as they try to jumpstart their lives and careers, focuses on how food and hunger function in the series. In discussing film, *Signs of Life* features readings on why script writers need to know about myths, how Asian women are portrayed on the big screen, representations of gender, the offensiveness of the “Magical Negro” film cliché, social class and the monetization of morality, and the decline of westerns. There is a chapter on heroes and villains that deals almost exclusively in the realm of the archetype. Youth is not an itself an object of study.

But what of young people as writers or social agents? Maasik and Solomon understand the work of cultural semiotic analysis to be powerful, not only in helping youth learn to think more complexly and write more persuasively but also in helping them make social and cultural interventions. That is, young people’s power is wrapped up in their status as students. The final reading in the textbook asserts that “[n]othing ever ‘ends’ in culture—and nothing is ever new. Conditions change. Cultures change, sometimes” (qtd on 556). The book makes clear that this potential change, however slowly and difficultly it may come, is the result of tapping into these persistent cultural currents, learning to read them, and challenging their dominance. The place that this work happens, the textbook argues, is school.

Academic life plays a critical role in youth’s becoming in *Signs of Life*. “American Dreams,” an essay in the identity chapter, is narrated by the author, a gay man who grew up in the South before going to Harvard and learning to talk back to the American Dream. At first, the author finds himself turning his back on his Southern roots, changing his accent and trying to fit himself into the image of the socially mobile he sees at his school, though he eventually finds “true freedom” in “mak[ing] [his] own decisions about

what [he] wanted out of life" (qtd on 322). This growth emerges from conversations with an influential professor, from reading, and from learning to ask questions that challenge the "natural" order of life as he had learned it. In a different essay, "The Shock of Education: How College Corrupts," a journalist with working-class roots describes college as "the Great Change," reporting on the "discomfort" of social mobility and the difficulty he and other students like him experience of separating themselves from their families in order to "accomplish more with [their lives] than merely earning a paycheck" (qtd on 532). Young people here, students, are imagined as those with the power and the potential to disrupt—tapping into a key characteristic of the figure of youth. They, presumably, have the access to the resources, the time, the freedom, and the desire to decode hegemony and to resist it. Maasik and Solomon express this hope to their readers directly in the introduction: "It's your turn now. Start asking questions, pushing, probing" (19).

The exercises collected in the book are likely recognizable to many college writing instructors. While somewhat ordinary in substance, they nonetheless direct students toward that work of questioning, pushing, and probing. Many prompts in the textbook emphasize reflection, both of the individual and of the social groups the individual may belong to. One assignment, for instance, asks students to observe and categorize fashion styles chosen by students in their class and to discuss what these styles are meant to say about the individuals who chose them, how perception might differ from intention when using fashion as a sign, and whether a kind of group identity emerges from these individual differences (73). Another asks students to think about their consumer behaviors, and to consider what motivates them to shop and how they

understand their own identity productions in their purchases. Students are encouraged to keep a journal, wherein they might “contemplate [their] own and [their] famil[ies’] possessions” (109); “explore [their] own abilit[ies] to multitask” (402); “reflect upon [their] own use[s] of text messaging, social media, and other forms of electronic media” (406); and “[r]eflect on the effects—positive or negative—that attending college may have had on [their] relationship[s] with [their] famil[ies] and high school friends” (538). They are invited to take semiotic analysis on the road, to read signs in their original contexts (93). The textbook’s activities encourage students to interview others as a means of discovering or challenging cultural patterns (93, 311, 538). One project tells students to conduct a social experiment with their class, following the “media-free” research model, and to collect and analyze their experiences and those of their classmates (406). The majority of tasks in *Signs of Life* figure young people not as future media moguls or individual struggling to define themselves. They are not imagined in this textbook primarily as cultural producers but as researchers and critics; as interrogators, interrupters, and interveners. The text sees young people, students, as capable of effecting change—with the help of academic training. (That message may look familiar through the rose-colored glasses many of us in rhetorical education have tried on at least once or twice!)

Media Journal

Unlike *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life*, *Media Journal* did not make it into the twenty-first century. It was, however, published in a second edition in 1999. Like the other two textbooks, *Media Journal*—authored by Joseph Harris, Jay Rosen, and Gary

Calpas (who joined the team only for the second edition) and published by Allyn and Bacon—links the study of popular culture and college composition. The textbook collects critical readings about cultural products and practices and offers questions for discussion and prompts for writing related to those readings. Unlike *Signs of Life*, with its focus on semiotics, *Media Journal* rejects a singular method or theoretical approach to reading media objects. As the authors put it, "[their] aim is not to inculcate students with a certain set of critical methods or terms or to introduce them to the academic study of popular culture, but to offer them opportunities to rethink and write about their own experiences with the media, to come to their own understandings of our common culture" (x). *Media Journal* prides itself in "tak[ing] the experiences and perspectives of students seriously" (ix). Where *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life* see the study of pop culture as an area of study with comparable merit in the composition classroom, Harris, Rosen, and Calpas understand their sole focus to be "the teaching of writing" (ix). Their "[use of] the media as the subject for a course of writing" is "a *strategic* move that allows students to center their work on a subject they know and care about" (ix).

But what do *Media Journal*'s authors mean when they talk about taking students and their experiences seriously? How are they imagining students? In the student-facing introduction, the authors "ask [students] to become ... critics of the culture," people "concerned with appreciating, understanding, connecting, and talking back to the media" (1). Simply consuming media, they insist, is not an option because though we use media, media also use us:

> When we're watching the evening news, or flipping through the pages of a magazine, or listening casually to the radio in the morning, we are part of

> the production of a valuable commodity—a mass audience that can be packaged and sold to advertisers. … To live in a culture where the mass media are heavily commercialized is to be on the receiving end of innumerable acts of packaging and persuasion—of attempts to convince us to accept this image or that notion of ourselves. (1–2)

For Harris, Rosen, and Calpas, becoming a critic, "defin[ing] your own critical voice" (525), is a matter of maintaining agency and control in an increasingly mediated world. Criticism, which the authors understand as a practice rooted in academia, helps consumers resist becoming commodities themselves. The authors are therefore "most interested in students' experiences as *intellectuals*" (ix, emphasis original). Reading—"being engaged, involved, committed" to cultural objects—is, in *Media Journal*, a form of action, "an act with consequences" (2). Writing is the culminating act of criticism (at least in academia). The book encourages writing from students that is "personal but not confessional" (x), and the authors understand that writing to be part of a more active intellectual, and social, project.

One way *Media Journal*'s authors work to take students seriously is by being transparent about the machinery of the textbook. The introduction works as a handbook, explaining to students not how to do intellectual and critical work but rather how to use the text itself. Where *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life* walk their young readers through the processes of active reading, analysis, and the writing process, offering extended model arguments (student written or otherwise), *Media Journal* resists these moves. The authors instead discuss "the act of writing" as a common capstone after "reading and rereading, noticing and note-taking, talking and arguing … at a university"

(7), and they stop short of laying out steps, strategies, or best practices. In a section titled “Drafting, Revising, Editing,” Harris, Rosen, and Calpas write,

> There is no single correct way to do this [producing criticism] … [s]o we won’t try in this book to offer you a method or formula for writing. We argue instead that the point is not to find yourself stuck with rigid rules and inflexible plans—like always making an outline, or never using words whose spelling you’re not sure of—that can get in the way of your attempts to write. (8)

Figuring out what it is that we have to say about cultural objects, they continue, “more often ... [involves] acting on hunches and intuitions than ... following a list of explicit rules and strategies” (11). Accordingly, the authors advise students to “try things out for [themselves] and see what works and what does not” (11). By keeping direct instruction light-touch and suggestive, the authors mean to honor students’ individual ways of working and to trust their capacities to make new knowledge from their own experiences.

The eponymous media journal, the prompts for which make up Part One of the textbook, becomes the forum for that kind of exploration. The journal is a “notebook in which [students] jot down ideas, work out [their] responses, record [their] observations, and generally conduct the intellectual work required of [them] by the assignments in this book” (4). The act of keeping such a journal, the authors note, “assum[es] that all of us have been influenced by our experiences with the media” (15). But the textbook relies on a kind of optimism, and so it also “assum[es] that we all make our own individual uses of these media” (15). The journal gives students a space to talk back to culture, to

try out their responses to it. The prompts ask about media influence but also about students' "*uses* ... of the images, characters, myths, ideas, and stories that the media have offered [them]" (15, emphasis original). Each journal prompt includes some brief opening remarks, a "Your Task" section, and "Possible Approaches" for completing the task. Many, many questions are included under the last heading, and the authors remind students in each prompt to use the questions that are generative for them and to disregard those that might not apply to them, might stall them, or would otherwise disrupt their responses. The first prompt, "A Day in the Life," for instance, offers no fewer than twenty questions, posed mostly one after the other, that make up the last two paragraphs of the prompt. I quote the first of those two paragraphs here to give a sense of the textbook's tone:

> As a media user, what do you find yourself doing a lot of? Are you a habitual reader, TV watcher, music listener, journal writer, telephone talker? Would you go so far as to say that you're addicted to any particular communication experience? Which medium, if removed from your life, would leave a significant absence? Which media experiences do you find most pleasurable, or, to put it another way, the easiest to have? If you could have your way and spend your time as you please, would you spend a significant portion of it at the movies, listening to music, watching TV, reading trashy novels, or flipping through magazines? What media experiences do you find most rewarding? Which ones touch you most deeply? (16)

Despite the deluge of questions, the "task" for that prompt is relatively straightforward: "Here, as a way of getting started, we would like you to document and reflect on your media habits and routines" (15). The authors offer this array of questions in the hopes of helping every student engage; surely, one of these questions can get students started, and if they get stuck, certainly another question will keep them writing. Other prompts for the media journal encourage students to think about how they use media to stay "in touch" with others and with information more generally (17); whether media functions as an "escape" for them—and from what they might be escaping (19); the relationship between their identities and the music they listen to (21); the nature of their relationships to celebrities (23); or when media disappoints or frustrates them (35). The authors offer twelve prompts for the journal in total. Interestingly, the journal is imagined not as a place for students to theorize but rather as one where students can record and reflect on what they know best: their own lives. The authors write, "Try here to talk about your own experiences with the media. That is, try to give answers to these questions that are true for you, not for the 'masses' or some imagined media user" (20). While elsewhere, links between individual experience and collective experiences are made, the authors want students to avoid producing overly general interpretations of culture in their journals. What matters most here are the textures of the individual, everyday experiences of students' lives.

Though *Media Journal* foregrounds student experiences and student writing, a collection of essays written by professional, adult writers makes up most of the textbook's pages. The readings cover advertising, reality TV, celebrity, rap, zombies, shopping malls, consumerism, representations of gender and race, technology, jeans,

Playboy, talk shows. These topics overlap with the other textbooks (although Barbie is absent). In fact, different versions of one essay, about advertising in feminist magazines, appear in both *Media Journal* and *Common Culture*. Some essays in *Media Journal* offer histories of culture, akin to those privileged in *Signs of Life*, but, as the authors promise, no single method or theoretical approach to culture dominates the text.

A handful of the essays are quite long, spanning over twenty pages, and overall, the readings in *Media Journal* feel more academic and highbrow than those in the other textbooks. Here authors cite Barthes to talk about sitcoms (260) and Bordieu to question whether or not we should take television seriously (328). The essays—which include reprinted selections from scholarly monographs and from *Psychology Today*, *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *New Republic*, and *The Nation*—were chosen, Harris, Rosen, and Calpas tell us, because they found them to be "unusually smart, unpredictable, and stylish," "the work of writers who are both worth imitating and worth arguing with" (36).

While the essays in *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life* are separated into chapters which group them by media type or help the textbooks articulate model arguments about culture, the readings in *Media Journal* are not organized by topic, medium, category, use, or influence. Rather, they are all collected under "Part Two: Readings" and appear in alphabetical order according to their authors' last names. This radically different organizational strategy is a new feature for the second edition of the textbook. The authors express their hopes that "this new structure not only supports [their] interest in having students reflect critically on their own experiences with the media but also allows teachers more flexibility in designing their own courses using

Media Journal" (x). In *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life*, the authors introduce each essay with a short blurb offering biographical information about the essay's author and the essay's original context, and guiding students into the reading. Here, there are no such prefaces; rather, permissions for reprinting, along with a citation of the original publication, are printed in small font at the bottom of the first page of each essay. By not organizing these readings in a way that makes an argument about them, and by not creating a clear path into the readings for students, the authors mean to give students freedom and space to do some intellectual trailblazing. Harris, Rosen, and Calpas ask students to think of the readings as "only [the] beginnings" (39) of their critical work. The emphasis is consistently on autonomy, choice, and individual experiences.

The essays in Part Two, and their accompanying response prompts, demonstrate that the authors of *Media Journal* understand students as competent and conscientious thinkers. By including these long and sophisticated texts, the authors show that they are confident in students' ability to take on intellectual challenges. Through the curation of these essays, it becomes clear too that the authors are not concerned with keeping students entertained, an oft-touted "perk" of teaching pop culture. They do not pander to students. In fact, young people, youth, and youth culture are barely present in the text. Although one essay begins with the story of an eighteen-year-old obsessed fan girl who, in 1949, shot a famous athlete she fell in love with despite never having met him (45), the remainder of the essay offers a list of similar encounters—perpetrated by men and women of all ages. While it seems at first that this essay might be about youth as creatures of passion, impulsive slaves to love, the author ultimately makes an argument not about youth but about celebrity. Other essays seem

to talk right past youth. They cover decidedly "adult" matters: home decor magazines (80); office life (181); kitchen design (340) and kitchen appliances (456); the romance reading habits of middle-aged women in a small, midwestern town (363). Students, according to *Media Journal*, need not be talked down to or singled out. They don't need censors, either. Thanks to the alphabetical-by-last-name organization of the essays, the first sentence of Part Two reads, "I decided it would be a real fun idea to get fucked up on drugs and go see Tangerine Dream with Laserium" (qtd. on 40). Harris, Rosen, and Calpas believe students can not only "handle" this content but can do something interesting, and critical, with it.

After each reading, *Media Journal* provides three post-reading question sets. The "Coming to Terms" section asks comprehension/processing questions; "Reading as a Writer" questions direct readers to focus on the rhetorical construction of each essay; and "Writing Criticism" questions prompt students to connect the essays with their own thinking and writing (x). Unlike the reading questions in *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life*, and in keeping with the tone of the media journal prompts, these questions do not appear in numbered or bulleted lists. Rather, the authors offer long, detailed prompts, stuffed with questions and delivered via formal paragraphs. The questions are crafted to be unobtrusive and open-ended. They call attention to the machinery of the composition class by making it clear that someone (the authors—although they will not see students' responses—and presumably the teacher who is using the textbook) is interested in hearing what students have to say about a topic. Nearly every prompt initiates a writing response through a request: "We'd like to you to …," "We want you to …" Many prompts offer alternative ways into the conversation initiated by the reading ("Another approach

for this project would be …” (89)). Making options available to students gives them space to figure out how best to connect their perspectives with the question being posed, or even to resist the question altogether.

The reading questions and writing prompts offered in *Media Journal* are, for the most part, rather conventional. As in *Common Culture* and *Signs of Life*, the questions in *Media Journal* ask students to engage with the readings, to talk back to them, and to compare the authors’ comments and insights to their own experiences. Some prompts encourage students to observe people or places, to visit or revisit specific media objects, or to interview friends, family members, classmates, or strangers. Students reflect, process, critique. In response to one reading, an assignment invites students to think about themselves as cultural objects, considering how they are seen and understood by others. It reads, “We’d like you to ... write an essay in which you ‘define’ your generation and offer your take on its own sense of self-identity or cultural independence from another generation through discussing a set of media and popular culture texts” (307). It offers a second option: "As an alternative approach, … you might examine a set of popular images and generational markers already in place to describe your generation” (307). Offering two options for completing the task is not in itself a radical move, but the gesture, which suggests there is not only one right or expected way to approach the inquiry, produces creative space for students. “Part Three: Projects in Criticism” rounds out *Media Journal* with a set of prompts designed to get students started in “sustained critical projects” (513). Those projects include a media autobiography (513), a critical essay about the meaning of news (517), and an interview with someone from a different generation about their relationship with media (522). The

goal shared across all of the exercises is to give students an opportunity to practice being good critics.

Though there is no sustained case study or extended argument modeled in *Media Journal*, a brief example, offered in the introduction chapter, helps clarify what it is that Harris, Rosen, and Calpas hope students can accomplish through their textbook. The example takes up the game show *Jeopardy!*, which the authors argue, “celebrates a view of knowledge as the simple ability to recall random and disconnected facts” (3). Why, they ask, might “we find this mastery of trivia so entertaining” (3)? Perhaps, they think aloud, “we could grant that there’s always a certain joy in knowing the right answer to a question” and “connect this pleasure to patterns of schooling that stress the memorization of facts or the experience of being routinely bombarded with vast amounts of (mostly useless) information nearly every day of our lives” (3). The analysis of *Jeopardy!* quickly moves toward a critique of the banking model of education and an expression of skepticism about our relationship with culture more generally. We, collectively, are being duped, the authors seem to argue.

What young people need, then, according to *Media Journal*, is to make lines of inquiry like this one a daily habit, so that “we can start to subvert the intentions of [cultural products’] makers and to replace them with our own” (3). The authors use this argument to “sell” the study of pop culture to their students: we need to bring the everyday into “college classrooms,” where things get “questioned or pushed or changed” (3). Not every college class can give students this critical edge. In the discussion questions following the essay about Tangerine Dream, the authors note that they selected the piece, in part, because they believed it could “[compel] readers to

examine and rethink their reading practices and possibly their expectations of what students may be asked to read in a college composition or writing course" (42). They continue, "We are interested in the ways this text might be said to *frustrate* your previous training as an 'academic' reader or to call upon you to read a text in alternative ways" (42). The textbook therefore makes an argument about youth similar to that made by *Signs of Life*: young academics, through their intellectual pursuits, can disrupt the status quo.

Throughout *Media Journal,* taking students seriously means treating them as individuals and as academic colleagues. Young people here are not singled out, nor are they "babied"; they are not eased into academic conversations but dropped into the parlor. Harris, Rosen, and Calpas narrate this fact plainly. In this middle of the introduction chapter, they cite Kenneth Burke at length, explaining to their readers how they mean to invite them into ongoing scholarly conversations through the exercises in the book. The prompts are written to excite students and incite writing, and the authors eagerly await students' ideas. ("[W]e're interested in your take …" (360), one prompt explains.) Harris, Rosen, and Calpas refer to students as "other cultural critics" (6). They cite their own thinking, marking their own intellectual journeys for students. At the bottom of page eight, for example, the authors point out in a footnote that "[m]uch of what [they] have to say" about writing comes from *Learning to Write/Writing to Learn*, a book by John Mayher, Nancy Lester, and Gordon Pradl.

In *Media Journal*, young people are imagined as most efficacious in their roles as students, but youth itself—as a category and as a demographic descriptor—is not exceptional. Young people are not figured as particularly susceptible to media influence.

They are not imagined as waiting to inherit the future of cultural production and therefore in need of practical, transferrable training. Rather, in *Media Journal*, young people are members of our shared communities—the everyday and the academy. They already have something to say. What they need, the textbook argues, is time and space to think, a forum to articulate their ideas, and an engaged audience ready to listen.

Conclusion: Textbooks as a Window, Textbooks as a Mirror

By tuning in to textbooks in this way and tracing how they construct youth through their approaches to culturally engaged composition pedagogies, their reading selections, and their assignments, we learn more about youth as a figure but also about our disciplinary imagination, our sense of what rhetoric can accomplish, and our relationship to contemporary political economic conditions. Despite being objects for consumption themselves, these textbooks also make arguments about the potential dangers of consumerism and how academia can, if it can, try to intervene in capitalism's co-opting of our epistemologies and our social lives. They reveal too a number of the live and generative tensions in composition studies around students: what we think we need to know about them; how we might make them value our (often mandatory) courses; what we should teach them; what they need to take away from our classes to find success (however we or they define it). Unsurprisingly, these tensions are tangled up with our disciplinary concerns about neoliberalism: How can we do more in our classes with fewer resources? How can students find time for their writing? What are "twenty-first-century" literacy skills, and how do they intersect with conversations about transfer and the bootstraps myth? What future awaits students under neoliberalism, and

what does it mean to prepare them for precarity, uncertainty, instability, contingency, etc.?

Textbooks are a particularly interesting place to follow these inquiries because of the seemingly impossible work they must do. A textbook should have some universal or generalizable appeal. It should be portable and accessible. It should be authoritative but adaptable. It should reflect the latest research in our field, despite the lengthy timelines of print production. Many composition instructors, especially those who are interested in culturally engaged writing pedagogy, seek a book that can spark student passions and potentially ignite students' critical (or even political) sensibilities. Can such a book also blaze its way to the top of a bestseller list, or even break a profit? Can it secure the buy-in of writing program directors or administrators? Does it speak to the needs of students in this economy? Are these even the questions we should be asking?

Common Culture, *Signs of Life*, and *Media Journal* offer three different approaches to circumventing these impasses. All three work, in their own ways, to prepare and/or make space for the next generation. They see value in youth and are invested in helping young people learn and grow. *Common Culture* begins with what is perhaps the most dramatic proposition (we are all being controlled by pop culture) but offers a less radical response (we must preserve our ability to define ourselves as we prepare to take over those manipulative media industries). *Signs of Life* leverages semiotics as a means of folding students into the historical present, helping them to understand the connections amongst the various spheres of their lives; its culminating work, critique, stops short of asking students to imagine themselves as producers in or agents of change in the world. The text privileges academic responses to social issues,

positioning students as critics. *Media Journal* offers a more flexible approach to cultural criticism, one which works to honor students as individuals and to immerse them in ongoing cultural debates. Here, the endgame is a sustained critical project, typically an essay. As with *Signs of Life*, *Media Journal* favors an academic response to the trials of our time.

These approaches have their merits. They also all lean heavily on textbook conventions and approach students and youth in limited ways. I want to close here with a series of questions which might help us shake up the textbook form and function. What might a textbook that figures youth or the work of composition differently look like? What might it mean to invite students to write into a book's pages, to interact with it in a material way? Who would bear the price of such a revision? (I imagine publishers, for one, would be happy to decimate the textbook resale market in that way.) Would a wiki textbook—comprised of hyperlinks and crowdsourced text, navigated through undirected pathways, and full of opportunities for students to add to, move, or erase parts of the textbook itself—invite students to define their own goals and activate their cultural facility in a critical educational project? How might an unbound version of one of these textbooks—with loose readings, prompts, and questions packaged together in a box or even in a three-ring notebook—encourage open-ended, playful engagement from students and teachers? What might we be able to accomplish if we think outside of the binding?

In the next chapter, I explore why the questions we ask and the prompts we assign matter. Turning to an extracurricular site of rhetorical education, I consider how

our pedagogical technē function to endorse particular habits in and stances toward the world, and how they encourage or limit possibilities for social engagement.

CHAPTER FOUR

Are They Feeling It?: Discussion Questions as Affective Guides to Dystopian YA Fiction

I would be remiss to consider youth—the figure, the demographic category, the market descriptor—in this moment without turning to the enormous, seemingly unstoppable force of young adult (YA) fiction. While fiction for young people is not new, its contemporary reach is both novel and noteworthy. Michael Cart, in *From Romance to Realism: Fifty Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature*, follows the evolving conceptualization of “adolescence” as a category in the early twentieth century, noting how various social, economic, and cultural forces gave rise to the “teenager” as a popular culture consumer and to the young adult as a “special kind of client” for publishers (5–7) by the middle of the century. Today, books for children and young adults have exceeded a niche market, representing instead, as Jonathan Alexander puts it in *Writing Youth: Young Adult Fiction as Literacy Sponsorship*, big business for publishers, schools and libraries, and literacy educators and scholars who both write about YA and draw from its energy to “cultivate and maintain student interest in reading” (11–2). By some estimates, an average of 30,000 YA books are published annually, netting publishers somewhere around $2.87 billion (“Young”). Despite the fact that just under half of YA title purchases are made by people under the age of eighteen (“Young”), it seems clear—from sales, the expanding market, the explosion of transmediated franchises spinning out of YA novels, and the plethora of youth-authored fan media responding to these texts (Alexander, *Writing*)—that young adult fiction has

captivated young people's attention. An important question, then, is what YA literature does for and with the attention of the young readers it engages.

In this chapter, I build on the work of scholars who have explored the pedagogical function of YA literature. There exists a wealth of scholarship that articulates what YA can teach young readers about themselves and how it strives to orient them to the world. Jeffrey Kaplan argues in "Why Literacy (and Young Adult Literature) Matters" that YA is socially significant because "young adults often read to learn about themselves and the issues that matter most to them" (70). This is not to say that young people read for confirmation of reality as they know it but rather that through their reading they are exposed to versions of the world, realistic or fantastic, which convey messages to them about who they are, where they might fit in, and what may be possible for them. Hadar Dubowsky Ma'ayan offers a case study which demonstrates YA's orienting and reorienting capacities. Following Erika, an at-risk and failing middle school student, Ma'ayan suggests that young adult literature that reflects young people's lives, especially when their experiences are not typically reflected in school environments, can re-engage readers in their schooling and help them begin to "[break] down the hegemonic privileging of white, middle class voices" (653). In this instance, YA literature validates Erika's experiences and offers her ways to make sense of and talk about them, all while also promoting her literacy development. Steven Wolk argues that YA teaches social responsibility and promotes civic participation (665). Through YA novels, Wolk maintains, readers are exposed to, and thereby invited to inquire and talk about "caring and empathy," "social problems and social justice," "government and the constitution," "power and propaganda," "social imagination," "historical consciousness

and historical empathy," "multicultural community," "global awareness," "war, peace, and nonviolence," and "environmental literacy" (667–9). YA literature, these researchers find, can promote individual growth and also strengthen communities.

A major component of YA's orienting work is its ability to guide not just the minds but also the hearts of the young readers. As Wolk writes, "between those covers [of a YA novel] is the world—past, present, and future—and the emotion and complexity of the human condition. … [I]nside these provocative books are stories that can help us to better understand ourselves, who we are, and who we want to become" (672). Michael Cart adds that teens—who, by virtue of their age, have a penchant for risk-taking and who are coming of age in an increasingly violent world—need books to help them learn "empathy and sympathy" (33). Whereas anger dominates other media, he argues, "[b]ooks can take readers into the interior lives of characters. … They can not only show what is happening to characters but also powerfully convey how what is happening feels" (132). Only books, Cart continues, "can improve heart-to-eye coordination and … create it when—as increasingly seems to be the case—it is altogether absent" (132). YA literature, according to these accounts, serves a unique function. It can access young people's attention and influence their emotional development. It creates a space for trying on and trying out emotional postures toward other people and the world. It trains emotional reactions, and it can also produce new affective possibilities for young readers—a capacity to which I will return later in this chapter.

Scholarship about YA imagines youth as people with valid life experiences and expertise and as builders of a potentially better and more just future. In that same scholarship, young people are also figured as potentially lost or wayward, as with Erika,

and in need of guidance from books, teachers, or both. The protagonists of many YA books, conventionally young themselves, share these traits. They are often simultaneously vulnerable and brave, malleable and innovative; they are subjected to the world, and they are poised to inherit the world; they are agents of change, but they still have a lot to learn. Despite these tensions around the figure of youth, YA, and especially the subgenre of dystopian YA, is regularly understood to do empowering and even critical work for and with youth. The end goal for many educators who assign YA is to "create, individually and collectively, a more caring and thoughtful and democratic society" (Wolk 672). As Wolk puts it, "[i]t all starts with a book" (672).

While all sorts of young adult fiction are pedagogical, I am interested here in what lessons dystopian YA specifically might communicate to young readers. Building from Cart's and Wolk's attention to the affective and emotional persuasiveness of YA, I explore how this genre works to orient young readers to the world. Rather than tracking how young adult literature is taken up in classroom spaces, I consider the pedagogical forces of dystopian YA in extracurricular contexts by attending to the discussion questions that get published in or alongside many contemporary dystopian young adult novels. In this way, I read dystopian YA as a site of extracurricular rhetorical education.

As I noted in the introduction, I lean on Jessica Enoch's definition of rhetorical education, which includes "any educational program that *develops* in students a communal and civic identity and *articulates* for them the rhetorical strategies, language practices, and bodily and social behaviors that make possible their participation in communal and civic affairs" (7–8, emphasis original). Approaching the discussion question sets that accompany YA dystopian novels as sites of rhetorical education, I

consider how they encourage readers to develop a sense of themselves as individuals and as members of a community, and how they work to orient young people to the worlds in and outside of the books' covers. Enoch argues that rhetorical education since the ancients has "interrogate[d] … basic questions" like "How do teachers educate their students for civic engagement?" and "What language practices, rhetorical strategies, and social and bodily behaviors allow for such involvement?" (11). Situating the novels and their corresponding questions in their social contexts, I explore how discussion questions use pedagogical nudges, both cognitive and affective ones, as they attempt to build habits of social participation in young readers. In keeping with my political economic analysis throughout this dissertation, I pay specific attention to how young people are introduced to the habits, attitudes, and practices which might sustain or challenge capitalism. I ask how YA dystopian novels work, through affect and critique, to introduce young people to and prepare them for particular kinds of social identities, roles, and relationships. How, in other words, do ways of reading serve as systems of valuation and evaluation for young people?

The Pedagogical Force of Young Adult Literature

Books written for children and adolescents have long been associated with the drive to teach life lessons to young readers. As Roberta Seelinger Trites notes in *Literary Conceptualizations of Growth: Metaphors and Cognition in Adolescent Literature*, YA is heavily influenced by the Bildungsroman, or "education novel," coined by Manfred Engel in the early nineteenth century (13). A derivation of the Entwicklungsroman, or "development novel," the Bildungsroman "focuse[s] on the

interior or spiritual growth of one character" (Trites 13). It traces a young person's journey from "decid[ing] ... the sort of accommodation to the modern world he (sic) can honestly make" into adulthood (qtd. in Trites 13). Put differently, Marianne Hirsh Gottfried describes the Bildungsroman as a story which follows a young protagonist through "a progression of connected events that lead to a definite denouement," "concentrat[ing] on actions, thoughts, and reflections equally … to portray a total personality" and a "balance between the social and personal" (Gottfried and Miles 122). Each of these definitions suggests a kind of "settling in," with young people and their environments finding ways to "accommodate" one another. Young characters, in the process of becoming, learn about the world and make a place for themselves in it; society, though, is also malleable, and hence, balance, equilibrium can be achieved.

Discussions of contemporary YA hint at a change in generic rules, one precipitated by a change in the flexibility and responsive of social spaces. In the neoliberal world, the logics of capitalism increasingly define social structures and practices. Young people's "accommodations" to the neoliberal world in which they live are not so much a measured choice of their "honest" capacities or a process of finding equilibrium. Rather, young people, and YA protagonists, find themselves more often fighting to fit in, or even just to survive. Jonathan Alexander and Rebecca Black, for instance, highlight how characters in some YA dystopias struggle to imagine alternatives to social realities, how opaque the process of social change can be in some dystopian YA novels, and how the costs of those alternatives are represented make them less attractive to characters and readers alike (223). Alexander argues elsewhere that while "much children's and YA literature has always been about survival[,] … such

an emphasis has taken a peculiarly *neoliberal* turn in its insistence that young people take responsibility for themselves and not rely on social structures for support, because such structures are often themselves under attack or in decline, if not themselves outright hostile to life" (*Writing* 28, emphasis original). If society is pliable, it is not yielding to young people's efforts to make space for themselves; it is instead crumbling under the pressures of capitalism.

Neither Alexander nor Black sees YA as wholly pessimistic, however. They argue that, despite neoliberal complications, dystopian YA offers an important space for "prob[ing] the 'structural limits' of how we imagine the future as born out of contemporary realities" (227). Cory Doctorow, an activist and journalist who has himself written two YA novels, agrees. He states plainly that YA "matters" ("Nature's"). "[K]ids," he writes, "read to find out how the world works. They pay keen attention, they argue back" ("Nature's"). Young people, Doctorow continues, "live in a world characterized by intense drama," and they make "'brave, irreversible decisions'" ("Nature's") each day. YA offers them a space to escape to, a space where they can try out new possibilities with less risk than they might encounter in real life. Reading YA, then, is an interactive experience, and a particularly important activity for young people coming of age in this historical moment. Nowadays, Doctorow argues, worry, private property, and prudence "are doing a better job than they ever have of collapsing the horizons of young people, denying them the pleasures of gathering in public or online for fear of meteor-strike-rare lurid pedophile bogeymen, or on the pretense of fighting gangs or school shootings or some other tabloid horror" ("Nature's"). YA gives young people back some space and some agency. It sparks young readers' attention and activates their curiosity. As

Doctorow notes, “there are kids who read your book, googled every aspect of it, figured out how to replicate the best bits, and have turned your story into a hobby” (“Nature’s”). YA stimulates and motivates young people in ways other contemporary experiences cannot.

Others share this faith in YA’s pedagogical potential. In fact, young adult fiction is largely understood by teachers, critics, and scholars as a form of pedagogy. Devon Brenner, in “They Read and Write, But Do They Critique?,” analyzes how Printz Award-winning YA novels model literacy practices. As a premise of this work, Brenner cites research that positions YA fiction texts as “expressions of the values and assumptions of a culture and a significant way of embedding readers in those values and assumptions” (qtd. on 40). The collection, communication, and immersion of readers into specific, curated experiences in YA novels, Brenner argues, teaches readers about their world. But immersion is not YA’s only pedagogical strategy. Brenner notes that “YA novels provide readers with a range of ways of being in the world, ways of acting and understanding that readers may assume as they make that transition into maturity” (40). In other words, young adult fiction sifts out and surrounds readers with a sort of ethical curriculum, and it models for them possibilities for finding their own way within it. Through this combination, YA as excerpt and as example, sets out to teach and train, to socialize, young readers.

These accounts of YA novels ushering moldable young readers into pre-scripted images of adulthood describe an emotional and affective pedagogy, one that aims to teach young readers specific attitudes and orientations to the world. Cart, in an interview with Jonathan Alexander in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, asserts that

YA's objective, at least in part, is "the acquisition of wisdom ... of the heart" ("Pedagogic"). Cart is optimistic about young adult fiction because of its potential to build human connections: YA, he explains, "offers us essential opportunities for cultivating empathy and for experiencing emotional engagement with others, for forming a community that civilizes" ("Pedagogic"). Jeffrey Kaplan shares Cart's interpretation of YA as an emotional guide for young readers. In the Summer 2011 issue of *The ALAN Review*, he surveys recent literature in education to understand why young readers read and why their literacy practices matter. He laments a focus in research on "what young people know" that pushes out research on "how young people feel" (69). Kaplan finds that readers read for pleasure, especially the pleasure of making connections, calling attention to a 2010 study on the "transformational" influence of a high school book club (69). He notes that readers "read to learn about themselves and the issues that matter to them most" (70); to understand the world around them (71); and to develop a sense of social responsibility (71).

Alexander, analyzing the pedagogical work of YA, implores scholars of writing studies and literacy to pay attention to young adult literature. YA, he argues, is "not just ... a market and reading phenomenon, but ... a powerful form of literacy sponsorship, one that guides young people's reading interests and promotes engagement with certain notions of what it means to be literate in contemporary capitalist and increasingly neoliberalized cultures" (*Writing* 12). In analyzing how literacy is figured in contemporary YA novels and how young readers pick up and respond to those novels, Alexander explores the publishing "corporation's interest in promoting literacies and multiliteracies, beyond selling books and media" and the sorts of habits and habitus around literacy that

are fostered by the "'harnessing' of young people's attention" (25) through these texts. Read in this way, YA, filtering the world for readers and modeling ways of living within it, functions both as a genre of entertainment and as a genre for socialization.

Dystopia and the High Stakes of Learning the Ropes

Perhaps nowhere are the educational projects of YA and the high stakes of figuring the world out more obvious than in the genre of dystopian young adult fiction. Dystopian YA is wildly popular. In fact, the "number of dystopian-themed books [is] at its highest since the 1960s" (P. Brown) This so-called "second wave" of dystopian literature is a result, in part, of the "explosion" of popular YA dystopian series in the first two decades of the twenty-first century (P. Brown). Critics and commentators have linked this trend to social, cultural, and historical crises. Green argues that these texts "explore what the future could look like once our unsustainable lifestyles cease to be sustained." Cart points to dystopia's uptake of uncontrolled consumerism, celebrity, reality TV, and rapid technological innovation (103). Wang suggests that YA dystopian novels are "essentially realistic" because of their depictions of "political issues, environmental, pollution, and nuclear wars fuelled (sic) by science and technology" (79). Others have made connections between the political economic realities that have thus far characterized the new millennium and the rise of this genre, interrogating, for example, the relationship between educational testing and dystopias (Alexander and Black), the closure of public spaces and the rise of YA fantasy worlds (Doctorow, "Nature's"), and the commodification of literacy (Alexander, *Writing*). Doctorow has written dystopian YA in response to the War on Terror and invasions of privacy and abuses of governmental

power after 9/11 (*Little Brother*, *Homeland*). In the aftermath of the housing market crash and the recession, and in the midst of austerity, receding social support networks, and increasingly hard-to-come-by, low-wage, and impermanent job opportunities, it is not difficult to find connections between the anxieties of dystopia and contemporary reality. These conditions are consequences of capitalism, and are not new, but they have intensified in the neoliberal era. The new status quo has become both a dystopia in and of itself, and fodder for the dystopian YA novels which have emerged *en masse* from it.

Long before its recent YA iteration, dystopia expressed historically specific textual responses to its contemporary circumstances. Literary and cultural critic Tom Moylan suggests that in fact "[d]ystopian narrative is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century" (xi): "A hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination," he writes (xi). That is not to say that all dystopias have projected the same nightmares from these realities. Frederic Jameson reminds us that "anti-Utopian fears and anxieties … vary according to the forms of state power with which this or that historical society is confronted" (195). Since the 1980s, as neoliberal governmentality has flourished, dystopia has functioned as a "textual strategy that [speaks] to the attenuated and terrible reality brought about by the capitalist restructuring of the economy" (Moylan xii) and to the consequent "cultural implosion" (186).

While dystopia can be understood as an anti-utopia, or utopia's opposite, literary scholars emphasize the genre's variety. Some conventions unify the genre. For example, dystopia builds its narrative from a "classic … proposition," identifying some social evil and asking what might happen "'if this goes on'" (Jameson 198). Its "foremost truth lies in its ability to reflect upon the causes of social and ecological evil as systemic" (Moylan xii) rather than individual; the dystopian enemy is structural, even when it speaks through an embodied antagonist character. Dystopia takes up collective fears that are not "reduced … to the mere disguised expression of other [personal, repressed] impulses" (Jameson 201). But what dystopias *do* with these evils and these fears can differ. As Jameson argues, dystopia, as with utopia, is simultaneously critical and ideological, and is therefore "fraught with … contradictions" (292). It names and critiques social ills, and in so doing, it can highlight systemic vulnerabilities or present the system as totalizing. Dystopias, as "maps of social hells" (Moylan 112), can simply document the terrain or can chart a way out of it. Moylan describes these variations as spreading out across a spectrum of dystopian possibilities:

> Although all dystopian texts offer a detailed and pessimistic presentation of the very worst of social alternatives, some affiliate with a utopian tendency as they maintain a horizon of hope (or at least invite readings that do), while others only appear to be dystopian allies of Utopia as they retain an anti-utopian disposition that forecloses all transformative possibility, and yet others negotiate a more strategically ambiguous position somewhere along the antinomic continuum. (147)

Along this continuum, Moylan and others have identified a few general dystopian categories. Anti-Utopias, for example, are "informed by a central passion to denounce and to warn against Utopian programs in the political realm" (Jameson 199). They take up specific political proposals and call attention to their failures. Within the anti-utopia, individual integrity may be preserved (Moylan xiii), but hope for a collective response to systemic evils is squashed. Another category, the apocalyptic dystopia, emerges from the sense that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" (Jameson 199); in it, "political illusions" are not "disabuse[d]" but rather ignored altogether (199). There are ex-Utopias and classic dystopias and more.

Laura Miller of *The New Yorker* has differentiated between "grownup" dystopias and YA dystopias by suggesting that the former "are grimmer." While Miller may be right about dystopias on at least one side of the spectrum, Moylan identifies a more utopian impulse in other dystopias, even the ones written for adults. Marking these as "critical dystopias," Moylan describes their "self-[reflexive] takes on the present system" as "not only astute critiques of the order of things but also explorations of the oppositional spaces and possibilities from which the next round of political activism can derive imaginative sustenance and inspiration" (xv). A critical dystopia, he argues, works "in the political and poetic spirit of the critical utopias" to "revive the dystopian strategy to map, warn, and hope" (196). The critical dystopia embraces hope. It is built from, and it communicates, confidence in both the individual human spirit and in the human community. Jameson refers to critical dystopia as a source of "the light of some positive conception of human social possibilities" which makes visible the genre's "politically enabling stance" (198).

The utopian potential within dystopia relies on the genre's ability to engage and inspire critical readers. That is, utopia comes from dystopia's "capability … not only to delight but also to teach" (Moylan xvi). Moylan reports that he tells his students that reading dystopia carefully "can be dangerous to their social and political health, for it can 'damage' their minds by allowing them to think about the world in ways not sanctioned by hegemonic institutions and ideologies" (xvii). Dystopia offers a means of invention, a potentially "empowering escape to a very different way of thinking about, and possibly being in, the world" (xvii). Some dystopias, then, might be read as training grounds for political activism, or, to borrow a different analogy, as sandbox environments for trying out potential political interventions. In its YA form, this generic capacity, when compounded with young adult fiction's narrative arc of becoming, helps to explain the critical promise many scholars find in dystopian YA, even in the midst of our neoliberal nightmare.

While literary scholars have debated whether YA dystopia (and young adult literature more generally) reflects, portrays, or offers escape routes from current conditions,[18] a predominant and shared sense of dystopia is that dystopia has not just something to say but also something to teach young readers about society's troubles. Hintz argues that "the major quality" of dystopian YA novels "is their advancement of a particular type of utopian pedagogy: one in which political action is addressed within the developmental narrative of adolescence" (254). The trope of the "adolescent hero or heroine … coming to terms with the world and self" (qtd. in Hintz 254), she argues, makes "young adult novels … promising vehicles for utopian writers to speculate about

[18] See Rudine Sims Bishop's "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors" for a sense of this conversation about YA and children's literature.

the way individuals position themselves in reference to a wider collective" (Hintz 254). The collision of YA and dystopian genre conventions produce a storyline wherein "political and social awakening" gets enmeshed with "a depiction of the personal problems of adolescence" (255). Coming of age, coming to terms with the world, thereby takes on a distinctly political tone. Dystopian YA novels may not teach specific strategies or political interventions, but rather they communicate "the need for political action and the exercise of political will within a democratic society" (255). In a dystopian YA storyline, being engaged in one's political reality *is* what it means to grow up.

Scholars and teachers alike have written about this critical promise of dystopian YA. Rachel Wilkinson writes in "Teaching Dystopian Literature to a Consumer Class" that she chooses to teach this genre specifically because it "exaggerates our modern context so that we can challenge it" (22). By playing out Jameson's "if this goes on" game, dystopian YA makes social systems and conditions available for critique; they convert the contemporary into a text. Clare Bradford makes a similar observation about dystopia, noting that "texts that draw attention to the processes by which societies enforce conformity to socio-political norms can situate readers as subjects who attain a degree of critical distance from narratives and characters, a critical distance that enables critique" (129). Wang sees dystopian YA as a form of rational and ethical teaching, one "used to warn readers of the social, environmental, ethical or technological crisis" (76) lurking amongst them. Dystopian YA for Wang serves as both a kind of realism and a medium for "social and political critique" (79). She understands this genre to do explicitly pedagogical work, describing dystopian YA as a "socialization textbook" (84). Alexander and Black come to a similar conclusion, citing research which

sees dystopian YA's "blatant didacticism" as "something like a training manual" for rebuilding a broken society (qtd. in Alexander and Black 210).

Dystopian YA, like dystopia more generally, can contain both ideological and utopian impulses, though it is more often understood as a critical genre, one which is remembered for the sense of hope and promise at its close. Alexander and Black draw from Marxist critics like Jameson and Ernst Bloch to explain how dystopian YA novels can function as "opportunities for critique of existing structures" (210) and as spaces "to interrogate and understand how we imagine the present" (210). Through their analyses of recent YA dystopias, they explore how the genre "show[s] young people coming into some critical consciousness about the inequities and injustices instantiated in the governmental systems to which they are subject" (223). Hintz maintains that the novels "honor dissent and agitation, and action based on a prolonged and combative questioning of ... society" (255). Dystopian YA's figuration of youth, she argues, "make[s] it clear that young people must be integrated into political life" and that "adolescents seem to be the only ones with any spark of political engagement" (263). Young people, through their fictionalized struggles depicted in dystopian YA (and presumably through their engaged reading of those novels), are imbued with political promise. Emily Temple, senior editor for *Literary Hub*, makes the case unequivocally: "If fiction changes the world," she declares, "it's going to be YA."

But other scholars are more skeptical of YA's critical promise, reading the pedagogic forces of the genre to be more disciplining or conservative than empowering and revolutionary. In describing how dystopia connects to its readers, Moylan emphasizes the role of the narrator in "bridg[ing] the gap between the author's/reader's

environment and the world of the story" (112). It is the narrator who offers readers "a tour of the world" and who is called back at the novel's end "to a more direct and politically charged role" (112). The narrator, often the protagonist, functions in these texts as the guide, outlining the social crisis at the heart of the novel and navigating readers through, and sometimes, out of it. What happens, then, when the dystopian YA narrator cannot find a way through, or when narrative devices outside of the narrator's control resolve some crisis, as if by magic or miracle? Alexander and Black critique dystopian YA on these grounds. They find that while dystopian YA novels "show discontent with reigning orders," they often fail to model "the *process* of coming to imagine ... alternatives" (223, emphasis original) to the status quo.[19] At the same time, the alternatives these novels offer are sometimes "as catastrophic as the worlds described" (212–3). In this way, Alexander and Black locate dystopian YA's anti-utopianism. Bumping up against these potential limits of dystopian YA begs the question of whether our system's evil, that which inspires these dystopian nightmares, is perhaps too totalizing to imagine our way out of.

In an op-ed piece written for *The Guardian,* Ewan Morrison expresses a similar concern about the critical promise some progressives identify in dystopian YA. Describing a friend who sees such novels as "great left-wing educational tool[s]," Morrison argues that contemporary dystopian YA functions "more like agit-prop for capitalism," critiquing "many of the foundational projects and aims of the left: big government, the welfare state, progress, social autonomy, and the laissez-faire market."

[19] Jonathan Alexander and I make a similar argument in our forthcoming article, "We Are All Abnegation Now" (Lee and Alexander), where we recount the inaccessibility of history in the *Divergent* series and how that inaccessibility undermines the characters' bids for agency.

When dystopian YA cannot help its readers name systemic evils, it runs the risk of serving the ideological status quo. Moylan, describing the real-life conditions in the neoliberal moment, notes how difficult it can be to parse the dystopian from the utopian. Even dystopian realities, he argues, can masquerade as utopian promises. Moylan points, for example, to the claims of progress and prosperity touted by Republican U.S. presidents over the last few decades. What is responsible for these "successes," he argues, is "more canny management of the population by an economic system still intent on a competitive and hence exploitative exercise of power over humanity and nature that takes the wealth of labor and profits of commerce from those who produce it and deposits it in the secure financial and geographical enclaves of the upper echelons of the executive class" (185). Dystopian doublespeak is neoliberalism's great sleight of hand. As David Harvey reminds us, the theoretical premise, and promise, of neoliberalism is that "human well-being can best be advanced" through the free market (2). While dystopian YA may feature the generic machinery to teach young readers how to fight the big systemic evil, the success of that pedagogical project is far from simple and far from guaranteed in the neoliberal present.

Dystopian Young Adult Fiction and Affective Pedagogy

Regardless of whether critics see dystopian YA as teaching young readers a more conservative or a more liberal curriculum, it matters *how* this genre goes about its pedagogical work. In her essay exploring the popularity of dystopian YA in the twenty-first century, Miller posits that dystopian YA is "routinely *less* didactic than its adult counterpart." Readers learn from YA, she argues, but not necessarily from the

novels' critiques. Children's authors strive to preserve hope, she suggests, and so they "equivocate when it comes to delivering a moral." Whereas adult dystopias "admonish" adult readers through their fictionalized futures for letting things get so bad, YA dystopias, Miller argues, put together "new, better way[s] of life … from the ruins" of the bad society, seemingly justifying the historical arc; after all, the bad place can't be so bad if so much good comes from it. Miller illustrates her point using the mega-popular book, movie, and merchandise franchise, *The Hunger Games* as her example. "*The Hunger Games* is not an argument," she says; "[O]nly someone insensitive to the emotional tenor of the story could regard social criticism as the real point of [the] novel." While Miller concedes that the titular hunger games are terrible, she notes how Katniss's preparation for the games (which consists of training but also "a glamorous makeover and a wardrobe custom-designed for her by her own personal fashion maestro") and her celebrity add up to "every teen-age girl's dream." Although Katniss struggles across the trilogy to stay alive and to stay true to herself, she earns a fairly happy ending: a happy family, an end to the war. So, Miller asks, what is the takeaway from the trilogy? That we can find pleasure in even the most painful of trials? That our struggles pay off in the end? Her question seems to be not only about what dystopian YA wants to say to its young readers but also about *how* young readers learn from these texts. If the plot is the teacher, then *The Hunger Games* could, maybe, offer important lessons about political structures and social and economic justice. But if readers learn from the "emotional tenor" of the text, the curriculum looks a lot different.

To better understand how a text's "emotional tenor" can be pedagogical, we can turn to affect studies. Across affect theory and through the uptake of affect studies in

different disciplines, affect has been defined in a variety of ways, and its terms and limits continue to be debated. In most accounts of affect, though, affect is about sensation as sense-making. Affect studies attends to how we relate to others and move through shared physical, cultural, historical, and social spaces. As I describe in the introduction and in chapter two, affect is pedagogical. As we experience the world affectively, we are trained to be in it. Lauren Berlant describes how through repeated encounters with things, people, other bodies, we form habitual reactions and responses, and then intuitions, from them. Sara Ahmed has explored how emotions move among and through individuals, affecting them and orienting them to the world; she argues that emotions are not bound to objects but rather produce objects for us. Closer to rhetorical studies, Catherine Chaput has argued that affect functions persuasively in the neoliberal moment in ways that challenge older models of rhetoric, namely Bitzer's rhetorical situation. Describing, for instance, a group's attachment to the confederate flag, she demonstrates that it is feeling, not reason, that binds them to the symbol: "They are energized through an affectivity that cannot be described in terms of rationality or irrationality," she writes (15). This work compliments research happening across fields about the power of emotions to change people's behaviors without necessarily changing their minds.[20] Affect is a moving guide and a guide for moving through the world, and in that sense, affect is a powerful source of education.

Attending to affect and its pedagogical dimensions suggests that we ought to look closer at and add more texture to our accounts of dystopian YA and its pedagogical functions. The relationships young adult dystopian novels build with readers and the

[20] See, for instance, Betsy Levy Paluck's work on the influence of a reconciliation-themed radio program in Rwanda and its capacity to promote tolerance among dissenting groups (R. Brown).

subject positions they invite readers to inhabit constitute a significant part of the teaching work of these texts. Abbie Ventura describes one type of affective teaching technique. She describes how, in some YA dystopian novels, readers are privy to information that characters do not have access to. This move, she argues, “flatters readers into a sense of their own insightfulness” (133), empowering and emboldening readers about their capacities to read situations and respond accordingly. Hintz argues that by intertwining the coming-of-age story of a young protagonist with a sort of political awakening, dystopian YA models young people “find[ing] [their] voice” and also shows “[their] voice[s] ... as having a deep effect on a wider society” (255). In this way, the genre teaches a lesson of efficacy to young readers, encouraging them to understand themselves as powerful political actors. It teaches readers not how best to use their voices but rather why they should; it invites them to feel powerful, to inhabit and experience social agency. This kind of affective pedagogy isn’t always utopian. Alexander and Black, for example, call attention to how dystopian YA novels “[emphasize] not just the difficulty but the personal *devastation* of working against dominant systems” (212). They argue that by tying together projects of resistance with their personal costs, dystopian YA novels might, in spite of their brave and ambitious protagonists’ examples, *discourage* activist tendencies in young readers by warning them against following the characters’ leads.

In what follows, I build on these accounts of the pedagogical work of dystopian YA. I turn to the discussion question sets which accompany dystopian YA novels to help me deepen the inquiry. As guides for readers to engage, at least semi-independently, with these texts, the question sets lay out paths into the stories. By reading them as

sites of rhetorical education, I seek to understand how these novels, and their publishers, imagine young people engaging on the civic scene and how they work to prepare readers to enter it. This work responds to Alexander's call for substantive study of "[t]he sponsorship and cultivation of affects through YA fiction" (*Writing* 27) by asking how, where, and when discussion questions invite young people to take up critique, and how, where, and when they orient readers toward other modes of engagement with not only the text but the world around them.

YA Discussion Questions as Epitexts: Where Inquiry and Affective Training Meet

Discussion question sets, whether printed and bound along with novels or easily accessed outside of them, are common companions to contemporary YA novels. These sets range in the number, type, and complexity of questions they include, but their very existence and commonality makes them worthwhile objects of study for scholars of rhetorical education and literacy practices. I have experienced this commonality only anecdotally, as information about discussion questions—including how many books feature them, who within a publishing house creates them, whom they are designed for, how they are meant to be used, or why they are produced—is hard to come by. This mystery though adds to my interest in them. As my requests for information from publishers about discussion questions sets have gone unanswered, I have been able to piece together only this limited account of them: At some publishing houses, editors identify books that they anticipate might make their way into a K–12 classroom and pass the manuscript along to either an in-house "school" team or a contracted teacher-consultant who creates the questions and returns them to the publisher for

inclusion with the book. At other publishing outlets, senior editors write discussion questions for their own books, especially if those editors have teaching experience or training. Discussion questions are not included with every edition or every print run of a novel. They are more common in paperbacks than hard covers, and they sometimes change between editions of a novel. Where discussion questions are not bound with a novel, they are sometimes made available as downloadable content on publishers' websites.

Discussion questions and reading guides are likewise an under-studied component of contemporary independent literacy practices. Some research exists that situates discussion questions in a formal reading curriculum, exploring how discussion questions ought to be written and implemented and what discussion questions ought to accomplish. Writing in a 1944 issue of *College English*, for instance, Paul Bunyan Anderson explicitly links discussion questions with assessment purposes, as a means of offsetting the "objective examinations" (105) he understands some educators to favor. Nearly five decades later, Jane C. Schaeffer published in *The English Journal* a plea for making discussion questions, as a part of classroom activities, better. Schaeffer implores teachers to write discussion questions that are "important" to students (40) or to allow students to write questions for themselves that "address topics that they care about" (40), including "moral and ethical ideas" (41) provoked by their assigned literature. Schaeffer sees student-generated questions as an antidote to "'textbook' questions" (40), questions created outside of the ecology of the classroom. Textbook questions, it is implied, are boring and designed to check comprehension. They are

often routine and stale, Schaeffer suggests, and can stifle interesting and interpretive discussions.

While externally imposed discussion questions catch some flack, discussion questions, as texts in and of themselves, merit more attention as pedagogical tools. Thinking about these questions through Gérard Genette's concept of *paratexts* can help us get a better sense of how and what discussion questions teach readers. A paratext, according to Genette, is a feature that "reinforce[s] and accompani[es]" other productions, something "like an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations" (261). Paratexts "surround [another text] and prolong it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to *make* it *present*, to assure its presence in the world, its 'reception' and its consumption" (261, emphasis original). Genette studies paratexts to help him name and describe the otherwise invisible technologies which make a book, a book. He explores the formal elements that created space for and helped readers to digest a novel as a novel and records the impact of those technologies on readers' experiences. In defining and analyzing paratexts, Genette considers their position in relation to the text (differentiating between *peritexts*—features within the story like titles, chapter headings, and notes—and *epitexts*—features that appear beyond the text which facilitate its dissemination and reception, things like interviews with the author or reviews (263–4)); when paratexts appear and disappear; the forms they take; and their rhetorical contexts (for whom and from whom the paratext is delivered, and for what purpose; 263). Genette understands paratexts as features that help an author control how his or her novel lands in the world. Paratexts do interesting work as pedagogical technologies, guiding the reader through

the text and directing their reading experiences. They draw readers' attention to specific moments, create a framework for making sense of stories or details, and open up space for critical inquiry. In a recent uptake of Genette's work, Joe Sutliff Sanders explores how the marginalia in children's nonfiction texts encourage critical reading and critical thinking. Properly crafted, Sanders argues, a question or note in the margin of a biography or other informational, nonfiction children's book can "invit[e] critical engagement" by encouraging a reader to "[dwell] not on the answer ... but on gaps in knowledge, well-intentioned mistakes, and errors in the interpretation of evidence" (120).

Children's fiction lacks the kind of marginalia Sanders attends to in nonfiction books, but through other kinds of paratexts, it works similarly to engage young readers. A discussion question is one such teaching tool. It can test comprehension; it can build social relations around a novel; it can delimit spaces for inquiry and critique; it can promote a specific reading of a novel; and it can help sell more books. In what follows, I read discussion question sets as neoliberal epitexts that direct readers' experiences through fictional texts. While many YA novels include discussion questions, I focus here on the sets included with three dystopian YA novels. As I explored in the literature review above, we (as teachers, as a culture) are invested in dystopian YA's pedagogical potential. As such, it is worth digging into the discussion questions that aim to structure engagement with those texts. I argue that while these discussion questions sometimes create space for critical inquiry, they also prescribe and reinforce particular habits within and attitudes toward the texts. In this way, discussion question sets engage in an

affective pedagogical project, one that may amplify or complicate the pedagogical projects at work in the dystopian YA novels themselves.

In the remainder of this chapter, I model one way of reading and attending to discussion question's pedagogical work. I do not mean in this analysis to generalize about what it is that all discussion questions—or even all dystopian YA discussion questions—do. Rather than evaluating the work of discussion question sets, I maintain here that we should pay more attention to how YA texts aim to orient young people—as readers, consumers, and potential political agents—to the world in and outside of these novels' pages. I argue too that by attending to these discussion question sets in this way, we can learn more about the pedagogical and persuasive power of affect in the neoliberal moment.

Learning to Read the Word and the World through Dystopian YA Discussion Questions

I focus my readings in this chapter on the discussion questions included in three dystopian YA novels. More specifically, I engage with the questions included in two editions of *Feed* by M.T. Anderson; those included in the first book of Veronica Roth's trilogy, *Divergent*; and those available online for the first book of Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy. As YA dystopias, these novels have each been read by scholars to have critical bite. They, potentially, engage young readers' political interests by calling attention to the problems and ills of society's present, dramatizing them into a problematic future, and positioning their young protagonists as agents whose work it is to navigate, and possibly disrupt, the oppressive system they find themselves in. While

they share generic possibilities, each novel also has its own affordances in terms of impact and reach, which I take up as I introduce each text individually.

M.T. Anderson's *Feed* is perhaps the least known of the three titles, but as a finalist for the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and the winner or nominee of at least three other major literary honors, it is also the most decorated. Sometimes categorized as a satirical or allegorical novel, *Feed* is "subversive" and "able to deliver a jolt" (at least according to the *New York Times* book review quoted on the back of the first edition). The book tells the story of a not-so-distant future when the connection between the Internet and humankind is closer than ever. The Internet "feed," in fact, broadcasts directly into the brains of those fitted with a receiving chip. Most children are implanted with the feed at birth (assuming a child's family can afford it), and most adults have been retrofitted with the chip to adapt to the changing technology. Through the feed, young people have access to School™—a private, dumbed down, and for-profit version of school; various social media and messengers; information databases and search engines; their own data, including biodata, on the cloud; an endless marketplace; relentless advertisements; and more. In the novel, the main character, Titus, and his friends experience a feed disruption thanks to a hacker and are hospitalized while doctors troubleshoot and monitor their feeds. Titus befriends another victim in the hospital, Violet, who experiences permanent damage as a result of the hack. Because Violet received her feed chip late in life, it had not meshed as well with her biological components as other kids' feeds. More importantly though, as a late adopter and the daughter of a skeptic (Violet's father has only a detachable, headset version of the feed), Violet reluctantly used the feed, refusing to give herself over to the

medium as completely as her peers. The corporation that runs the feed has extensive profiles on compliant users, but Violet, through nonsensical purchase patterns and intentionally confusing search histories, has an incomplete, unpredictable profile. The corporation will not assist with the medical procedures necessary to save her life because of her illegible profile. And so, Violet forfeits, or is robbed of, her life. As she dies, she rages against the feed and criticizes the others who embrace it. She asks Titus to carry on her memories and to help her experience life, real life, away from the feed, before she passes. While Violet resists the feed, Titus resists her disruptions to his normal routines. At the novel's close, it is unclear whether Titus will carry on Violet's hopeful vision for a less dependent life with the feed, but Violet's resistance meets its tragic end.

Feed was first published in 2002 and reprinted in a second edition in 2012. Each edition includes discussion questions,[21] and fascinatingly, the discussion questions change between the editions.[22] The "illocutionary force," to borrow Genette's phrase (268), of each set is fundamentally different: while both prompt interpretive work, the first set foregrounds questions which prompt rationality and critical thinking, while the second set often calls for more emotional attention, asking readers to feel their way through the text and focus on relationships in and around it. Read side by side, the first set—the critical thinking–focused set—is noticeably more explicit in its attention to

[21] It is unclear to me at this point in time whether discussion questions were included with *Feed* originally or if they were added after the novel was recognized for its literary merits by these various organizations. The first edition of *Feed* I have been able to get my hands on includes discussion questions, though it also features the National Book Award Finalist seal on it, suggesting it may come from a later print in that run.

[22] I reached out to M.T. Anderson on Twitter to ask whether he had anything to do with the discussion questions or if he knew why they changed between the first and second editions of the book, and he replied that "professionals" handle those materials and that the questions probably changed just to commemorate the book's tenth anniversary.

subversion or resistance, playing up the potential political critique made possible by the dystopian novel.

The questions in the first edition invite readers to think critically about the pros and cons of the actions of the characters and of the conditions of life in this futuristic world, to forge connections between that fictional future and the real present in which the readers live, and to make rational hypotheses about the choices the author made when writing the novel. The questions, in short, largely invite readers to think their ways through the novel. Take the first question, for example:

> The “feed” of the title features chat and bannering functions that have prototypes in modern Internet technology. What do you think the author is trying to get across by having these functions happen directly within people’s brains? What would be the benefits and drawbacks of that kind of system?

The question gestures toward critical thinking with a progressive political edge. It encourages readers to move between the fictional world and their own and to do a cost-benefit analysis of technological advances and their social consequences in each. The economic framework and language here though is worth noting; capitalism’s bleed into everyday life and logic may not be explicit to neoliberalism but is certainly amplified by and in it. That this question about technology and social connectivity in a novel geared toward young people leans on a cost-benefit analysis suggests a particular kind of rational habituation, or perhaps more dramatically, that rationality has been co-opted and changed by capitalism, an argument which has been made persuasively by Wendy Brown and others.

Some questions included with the first edition of *Feed* venture into the affective realm. One question, for instance, asks readers to identify with characters in the novel, though the question becomes somewhat gimmicky: “Violet lists all of the things she wants to do before she dies. Do you share any items on her list? What can we learn about her from her list? What might someone learn about you from your list?” The thought experiment keeps readers engaged primarily at the level of literary crafting. Who is the character of Violet? How does the author show us through Violet’s list who she is, and how might your own list present you to those around you? On one hand, the question asks readers to identify with Violet, to imagine themselves also in the position of making a bucket list, and to think about the choices they have in crafting their own identities. But it also turns Violet’s actual, imminent death into a sort of lighthearted truth-telling game. This exercise does not ask readers to access Violet’s profound sadness and desperation or the anger and rebelliousness that fuel her resistance to the feed and to the system, which ultimately allows her to die.

Another question, the final question of the set, aims to forge a link between readers’ resistance and Violet’s: “The author dedicates this book ‘to those who resist the feed.’ What is ‘the feed,’ in a real-life context, and how can it be resisted? In what ways do you fight the feed?” For teachers and scholars who see critical potential in dystopia, this question hits many of the right notes. It is powerful in that it asks, explicitly, for readers to identify a force in their world which is at best double-edged and complicated, like the feed; to question it; to probe its weaknesses; and to strategize a plan for how they (“you”) would resist it. The verb tense in the last part of the question sets readers up to be present, active, and engaged when it asks, “In what ways *do* you fight the

feed?" (emphasis mine). While this could be read as a continuation of the question's hypothetical thought experiment—if the feed can be resisted, how do you resist it?—the use of the present tense also puts readers on the spot, asking them to consider their own participation in and cooperation with the oppressive force they identify, and inviting them to commit themselves to their own active resistance. The question prompts action-oriented critical thinking. Significantly, however, the question does not ask readers to connect to the affective dimension of such resistance. It does not, for example, invite readers to identify with Violet's desperation and rage, to find their motivation to fight or feel the need for change. Rather, critique and action are kept at the level of strategy, planning, and logic.

Where affect makes a bolder appearance in this set, the questions invoke a tone which encourages readers to come down on a particular side of the novel. One question, for instance, asks readers to consider the resistance they see in the book: "How does Violet benefit from resisting the feed? What price does she pay?" While the structure of this question is logical (in an economic way, even), asking students to weigh out the pros and cons of Violet's resistance, the question endorses a punitive attitude towards Violet's behavior. Violet must pay for her lack of cooperation; what is the cost, and is it worth it? When the cost is one's life, a word like "benefits" offers little compensation. Rather than asking what gains Violet's actions make for a larger resistance movement or how Titus might inherit some of the resistant energy Violet had stockpiled, the economy of resistance is singular and personal. Connectivity and collectivity are cut off by the question, and an individualist (and capitalistic) attitude towards life and how one spends it is modeled. Whereas the bulk of the first set of

discussion questions seems designed to elicit critical thinking, this question speaks to readers at the level of feeling. The affective energy it carries, however, does not align with the rational project of critique one might read into *Feed*; instead, it favors a more conservative ideological project.

I admit that separating out these pedagogical projects, the cognitive and the affective, is a somewhat artificial task. There is, after all, an embodied habit and posture in critique, and affect and cognition—feeling and thinking, pathos and logos—are not mutually exclusive. But this method of reading is nonetheless useful, as it offers us a way of understanding what it is that they do as they guide readers through a text. I divvy up these two impulses to draw attention to the affective disciplining built into discussion questions. Critical thinking gets a lot of air time for rhetorical educators, but affect too is a powerful teacher.

As I discuss elsewhere in this dissertation, one of affect's most compelling traits is its ability to move beyond its original site of context. As Ahmed writes, emotions can slide from one moment or scene into another, sticking onto another object in another scene when any number of conditions are right. Affect and its circulations are bound up in the conditions of its contexts. Recall the parallel Ahmed draws between emotions and commodities: "[F]eelings come to reside in objects, magically, as if they are qualities of or in things, only by cutting those objects off from a wider economy of labour and production" (227). That feelings lose their historical traces as they accumulate in and around objects is an essential part of their pedagogical project. Emotions matter for making sense of and being in the world. Their ability to move beyond the sites of their production, to transfer affective energies from object to object and from one scene to

another, highlights the significance of considering affect in discussion questions. Understanding how those emotions are shaped and guided is important for understanding what is being "taught" through discussion questions because these lessons, affective lessons, can travel.

The discussion questions in the second edition of *Feed*, published a decade after the first set, double down on affect, inviting readers to feel their ways through the text rather than reason their way through it. At the same time, explicit attention to political critique, which the first edition questions emphasize, is minimized.[23] Some questions in this set ask readers to think critically about the text, as the first edition questions did, and to articulate connections between the context of the dystopia and their own world; they set up elements of the novel at a critical distance for readers to inspect and dissect. But many of the questions in the second edition of *Feed* move readers toward an interpretation of those elements, guiding them through affective cues. One question prompts readers to make sense and take stock of the troublesome dystopic world the protagonists occupy but moves quickly from comprehension to evaluation. The question asks, "What is happening in the world outside the feed? Is it, as the old man on the moon insists, a 'time of calamity' (page 38)?" Here, the tone begins to guide readers towards a particular reading of the world in the novel. The old man on the moon who insisted that the world was falling apart was actually the hacker. In the novel, he is described as "the guy in the, you know … neck bat? Bow tie," a man of "maybe a hundred or so," "in a dirty old tweed jacket" with "this long white hair that looked kind of yellow, and his eyes were wide" (M. Anderson 35). The man is wearing a jet-belt, at a

[23] Ten discussion questions appear in each set. In the first edition's question set, the word "resist" (or "resisting" or "resistance") appears three times; in the second edition's set, no form of the word appears.

club on the moon for vacationing young people, when he grabs the teens, wrenches their heads back, and yells into their ears about the state of the world (36). The man, who hacks into the kids' feeds with a metal rod and is eventually violently subdued by police and arrested, does not just assert that they are in a time of calamity. Rather, his exclamation is more frenetic, incoherent—crazy:

> We enter a time of calamity. Blood on the tarmac. Fingers in the juicer. Towers of air frozen in the lunar wastes. Models dead on the runways, with their legs facing backward. Children with smiles that can't be undone. Chicken shall rot in the aisles. See the pillars fall. (39)

This question, then, does more than just ask readers to name what is happening in Titus's world and decide for themselves how serious those conditions are. It invites readers not to measure themselves against the protagonists—the young people who fall victim to both the system which promotes and enables the feed and to the hysteria of this "old man on the moon" who acts out against it—but instead against the ancient, seemingly out of touch, rambling man who kills a girl through his resistance and rage. To agree with the old man in the question, to acknowledge at a felt level that the conditions of the dystopian world are already so bad that some form of radical, even violent change, is necessary, is to align oneself with the crackpot. This aspect of identification in the questions, combined with the extremes of the evaluative terms (What's going on? Would you agree that it's a complete and utter catastrophe?), encourages readers to temper their own critiques and to quiet any anxiety or anger they may feel about the world of *Feed*. While the question cannot control the sticking and

sliding of emotions in social circulation, it posits a limited set of affective possibilities: the critic here is bad, dangerous, unstable.

The discussion questions in *Feed*'s second edition also collect sharp, negative emotions around Violet, who might otherwise be read as the victim, the hero, the martyr of the novel. One question, for instance, explains that "Violet gets very angry and bitter with her newfound friends" before asking readers if they "agree with all of her accusations about their lifestyle, or [if they] think she goes too far?" The question elaborates, "For example, Violet complains to Titus, 'Because of the feed, we're raising a nation of idiots. Ignorant, self-centered idiots' (page 113). Do you agree?" The answer, it seems, is built into the sequence of questions. The pair of questions that appear immediately before this one asks readers to evaluate their relationships with technologies like the feed and ultimately paints the feed in a positive light. The first question of the pair asks, "In *Feed*, product information flows directly, and unceasingly, to the brain. How deeply have commercial messages penetrated your own day-to-day life? Does the presence of that advertising bother you? Are there things about it that you like and that you would miss?" The question washes over critique of the infrastructure that makes possible such relentless advertising, removing the feed from its corporate context, treating it almost as a neutral medium. It erases the relationship between the feed, the feed corporation, and Violet's mortal drama, offering instead a question about the degree to which commercialism interferes with readers' daily lives: "On a scale of 'being bothered' to 'loving it,' how do you feel about advertisements?" the question seems to ask. The second question of the pair collects positive energy around the feed. It reads, "When Titus and his friends are disconnected from the feed for several days,

how do they entertain themselves? … If your life is routinely spent online, what happens when you go offline for an extended period?” The first part of this question creates a binary between connectedness (a function attributed to the feed) and boredom (a result of being unplugged). The question would have readers believe that the feed is a source of entertainment—period, full stop—not a source of danger, without its own needs (like profits or complete user profiles). It sticks the ideas of friendship, entertainment, and togetherness to the Internet—even the all-powerful, hyper-commercialized and totalizing Internet in the feed—and thereby, the Internet slides into view as a de facto, necessary presence, a staple of everyday life, and an integral part of sociality itself. Negative affects like fear, loneliness, and anger slip past the feed, but its absence snags boredom.

Violet, “bitter and angry” with her friends, disagrees with this reading of the feed. The questions, thusly sequenced, prime readers to be skeptical of Violet’s critique. As readers have been oriented toward their own reliance on and pleasurable relationship with the Internet and what it makes possible for them in their daily lives, they have little incentive to agree with Violet. Rather than focusing readers’ attentions on Violet’s resistance like the first discussion set or even building affective energy around the “price” and the prize of her nonconformity, the question puts readers in a defensive position: they can agree with Violet and thusly agree that she was right in her assessment of them as ignorant, self-centered idiots, or they can write off Violet and delegitimate her negativity. The question creates this possibility affectively, an alignment of attitude without necessarily having to change one’s mind about *Feed*’s dystopian world.

Reading these sets of discussion questions through this lens—tracing out their cognitive and affective pedagogical impulses of the epitexts—offers us insight into how the novel might be taken up by readers. Read together, the contrast in the sets helps make that work even clearer. While the discussion questions in the first edition of the novel have some critical edge, they largely encourage critical thinking, producing cognitive critiques that stay local to the novel. As the second edition's question set moves in the affective realm more than in the logical realm, it becomes clear how these sorts of questions work to habituate readers to specific, ideological habits. The pedagogical effect here is one of normalizing neoliberal life. Because affect hovers, lingers, and moves; because it has trans-situational and trans-temporal potential, these questions warrant our attention.

So far in this reading of discussion questions, it seems that I am making the argument that critical thinking is good (radical, subversive, anti-capitalist) and that affect does bad (damaging, pro-capitalist) things. Such an argument, however, is not only reductive but also impossible to support. Affect, after all, does not have an agenda. It is a medium and, I am arguing, a mode of teaching. While in the discussion question sets included with the two editions of *Feed*, affective energies seem to short-circuit critique, the affective pedagogical work of dystopian YA discussion questions more broadly is diverse and complex. The way of reading I offer here allows us to uncover some of that variety. I turn then, briefly, to the discussion questions which accompany two other dystopian YA novels: Veronica Roth's *Divergent* and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*. While these novels lack *Feed*'s literary honors, they are significant texts in their own rights. Each book is the first of its own trilogy and the inspiration for feature film

adaptations. Between 2011 and 2012, readers scooped up 36.9 million copies of books in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, and in 2013 alone, the *Divergent* trilogy went home with 6.7 million readers (Roback). These texts and their teachings, put simply, have reach.

Set in a dystopian and not-so-distant future, *The Hunger Games* tells the story of a sixteen-year-old girl, Katniss Everdeen, who volunteers as “tribute” in place of her younger sister. As tribute, Katniss must fight to survive the barbaric and titular Hunger Games, an annually televised event which pits children from the various districts of Panem, formerly North America, against one another to fight until only one competitor remains standing. The readers follow Katniss from her impoverished, rural home district and into the decadent opulence of the Capitol, where the Games are held. After a makeover and some training, Katniss enters the contest with little hope to survive and return to her beloved younger sister. She navigates the media spectacle, making uncertain alliances along the way, and growing ever angrier with the system that has separated her family and forced her to murder her peers. Laid over this survival and political revolution plot is a complicated romantic story that requires Katniss to choose between two boys from back home who love her deeply but care for her in radically different ways (and who represent for her, and readers, two radically different forms of political engagement).

While discussion questions are not included in the hardcover or paperback copies of *The Hunger Games*, they are readily available online. From Scholastic’s website, readers (or parents or teachers) can download a twelve-page discussion guide for the complete trilogy. This “featured reproducible” includes synopses of the three books, information about the author, discussion questions for each individual novel, a

set of questions for “Comparing the Books,” an overview of “Historical and Literary Connections” readers might make, and “Suggestions for Further Reading.” The guide emphasizes intertextual engagements, not only between books in the series, but also with other texts that readers may or may not have had previous experience with. One question stands out, as it approaches young readers with a difficult and, in Moylan’s sense, potentially “dangerous” text. It reads, “In 1848, Karl Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, ‘The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.’ Discuss this statement as it applies to the society and the government of Panem. Do you believe there is any chance to eradicate class struggles in the future?” The question explicitly engages political economic theory, and it asks readers to begin to imagine not only social change but the process necessary to bring such change about. The question also offers limited context for the quotation; for readers who are not familiar with Marx or *The Communist Manifesto*, the reference may read as innocuous, detached, academic. The question refers to class struggles, but it situates them not as part of the process that can bring about a more just and equitable society but rather as the thing a society might want to move beyond. The notion of struggle, set up next to the violence of the Hunger Games, might put off the kind of resistance Marx sees as necessary to social progress. Throughout the novel, and in this question, violence itself is bad, unjustifiable. Class struggle, then, is unjustifiable.

Like the questions from the first edition of *Feed*, a number of questions related to *The Hunger Games* and published in this guide invite readers to draw connections between the dystopian world and their own. One question, for instance, asks readers to think about why “the ‘tributes’ [are] given stylists and dressed so elaborately for the

opening ceremony," before it invites them to draw comparisons between the opening ceremony of the Hunger Games and "events in [their] world, either past or present." Significantly, the emphasis here is not on the games themselves or their punitive political motivations but on the fanfare that surrounds them. While readers are encouraged to question the spectacle, the quick move to comparison encourages superficial engagement with the ritual. Elsewhere, however, the comparative exercise has more critical bite. One question, for example, asks readers to name "the cruelest part of the Hunger Games" and to consider "[w]hat kind of people would devise this spectacle for the entertainment of their populace." It follows up by asking readers to draw "parallels between these Games and the society that condones them, and other related events and cultures in the history of the world." Readers are asked to critique the Capitol, to question the population which permits the Capitol's cruelty, and then to turn that critical eye toward their own world. The question prompts a cognitive critique through the comparison. By emphasizing cruelty and suffering, however, it gestures toward the embodied and the affective. The question itself does not have an affective engine, as did the questions in the second edition of *Feed,* which hinted at appropriate answers through their tone. This question instead asks students to think and talk about their feelings, to turn their critical gaze toward their emotions.

Other questions in this guide also treat affect as an object in this way. The first question, for example, asks, "How does Katniss feel about the country of Panem? Why does she need to make her face 'an indifferent mask' and be careful what she says in public?" While emotions are the focus here, the question describes emotions as performative, as part of that spectacle and fanfare. It moves quickly then to thinking

about the management of such emotions. Affect is cast as something additive and potentially dishonest, artificial and also tactical. Readers are not asked to feel or to dwell in their feelings but to, alongside Katniss, take stock of them and evaluate their worth. Another question showcases this approach to affect:

> Why does Katniss ignore [her coach's] advice to head directly away from the Cornucopia? Did she do the right thing to fight for equipment? What are the most important skills she has for staying alive? Her knowledge of nature? Her skill with a bow and arrow? Her trapping ability? What qualities of her personality keep her going? Her capacity for love? Her intelligence? Her self-control?

The question begins by asking readers to rationalize Katniss's decision and then to evaluate it. It pivots, though, to an accounting of Katniss's survival skills, amongst which it counts her capacity for love and her self-control. Feelings, habits, and attitudes are imagined here as resources, and potentially as liabilities. They are not part of building social relationships unless those relationships are based on exchange. Feelings are commodified, abstracted, and estranged from lived personal experiences. Yet another question underscores this "commercial" nature of feelings and social relations. It reminds readers that Katniss feels like she owes something to her fellow tribute, Peeta, and notes that she resents this debt. How, the question wants to know, does that relationship both define her personality and dictate her strategy in the games?

The questions designed to go alongside *The Hunger Games* do not ignore feeling in favor of critical thinking, as do the questions in the first edition of *Feed*, nor do they leverage affect against critical and progressive politics, as those in the second

edition of *Feed* seem to do. Rather, this set of questions appears to train readers to feel differently about feeling, to distrust their own affective responses, and to question the value of the affective engagements altogether. They prioritize survival and ask readers to measure social life—feelings, friendships, etc.—against a rubric of life or death.

I will turn, briefly, to read one last set of discussion questions. As I gloss *Divergent* here, the story may feel familiar. Like *The Hunger Games*, the novel tells the story of the dystopian future in North America and a young girl who must navigate the cruelty of a strict new order. Set in what was once the city of Chicago, *Divergent* depicts a society that has been divided into five factions, each of which focuses on one human trait: selflessness, kindness, truthfulness, bravery, and wisdom. Young people are born into a faction, but as they reach adolescence, they take an aptitude test—a simulation experience which is supposed to gauge their true, unconscious strengths—and then choose, with the help of their test results, a faction for life. *Divergent* follows Beatrice, Tris for short, whose test results are inconclusive. Born to the selfless faction, Abnegation, Tris chooses to join the brave faction, Dauntless. While she fights her way through initiation in the first book of the trilogy, Tris discovers what it means to be divergent—to have aptitudes for more than one faction. She also uncovers a conspiracy plot from the leaders of two factions to overthrow the government using young recruits from Dauntless as mind-controlled soldiers. There is, of course, a love story that gets drawn out through the trilogy, but *Divergent* depends heavily on an account and critique of social structures and systems. In this way, it seems significantly different from *Feed*, where subtler depictions of strained social relations between teenagers dominate the narrative, but similar to its generic cousin, *The Hunger Games*.

The discussion questions in *Divergent* invite readers to participate in the structural critique that sets it apart from *Feed*. One question asks, “Why is Tris’s government run only by members of Abnegation? Do you think this is a good idea?” Another supports that line of thought, asking, “What was the reason behind the creation of the factions? Do you agree or disagree that such a system is a beneficial way to structure a society? Do you think the factions are working ‘toward a better society and a better world’ (p. 44) as they say they are? What about the structure seems to be working for Tris’s society? What doesn’t seem to be working at all?” Readers are asked here to do cognitive work, but it is nuanced and complex cognitive work: they are first invited to explore logically and evaluate the governmental system, but then they are asked to historicize it, to interrogate how it is that the world of *Divergent* came to look the way it does. Readers are asked, as they were with *Feed*, to perform a cost-benefit analysis, but here the economic rationality is complicated by an affective lilt at the end of the question. Affect here seems to be working toward critique: What works, the question asks, but also what doesn’t work at all? What is okay, but also what is failing and how is it failing?

At the same time that affect and emotions are foregrounded in *Divergent*’s discussion questions, they are also detached from individual experience and divorced from feelings of agency and action. One question, describing the affective ambitions of Tris’s boyfriend, Four, asks, “Is Four’s desire to be ‘brave, and selfless, *and* smart, *and* kind, *and* honest’ (p. 405) realistic in this society in which he lives? Discuss examples of people in our own world who successfully bridge different cultures, perspectives, or ways of living” (emphasis original). One way to read this question is as an invitation to

interrogate these affective dispositions and think about their relationships with one another: What does it mean to be brave? What does it mean to be honest? Is honesty at odds with kindness? But, read differently, affective dispositions here function like collectibles. The italicized "and"s suggest excess. Readers are asked whether it is "realistic" to collect all of these emotional attributes. An affective array is laid out, and normative limitations are set. Four is the love interest in the novel, and Tris admires his idealism. That idealism, presumably, motivates Four's rebelliousness. Being brave and selfless and smart and kind and honest fashion Four into a sort of revolutionary leader. But while Four survives the trilogy, he is hardly triumphant. The primary fight throughout *Divergent*, both in the first novel and the trilogy more generally, is not for this sort of complete good personness or for an impractical, idealistic revolutionary ethos. Rather, what Tris fights for above all else is free will, the right to choose one's own destiny. Individual freedom—a value of neoliberalism—prevails. The move in the second part of this question is also significant. Here, people with multiple affective "aptitudes" are described as people who bridge different cultures, perspectives, or ways of living. Affective dispositions or orientations are removed and categorized; they are depersonalized but also not socialized. As with the questions for *The Hunger Games*, this discussion question set seems to work toward disaffecting readers from their own affective experiences. Rather than working to discipline readers' affect toward a particular reading of a novel, as with the second edition questions from *Feed*, these questions seem to discredit, depersonalize, or distance affect.

The Hunger Games and *Divergent* have been celebrated by many critics because of their accessibility and the relatability of their seemingly radical protagonists.

Headlines praising Katniss as “a great female role model” (Ellis) and “a role model for our times” (Moore) are not uncommon. Tris has been lauded for having “a lot of agency and a lot of power,” modeling what it looks like when a girl “is guiding her own story” (Clark). It is noteworthy, then, that while identification is a key part of the utopian potential of these novels, the discussion questions which accompany them treat affect in a dissociative way and downplay connectivity. These complex, and potentially conflicting, drives in the novels and in their discussion question sets highlight yet another reason why we ought to attend to discussion questions and why we need to pay attention to affect’s pedagogical work within them.

Conclusion: Recognizing the Importance of Affect for Rhetorical Education

Throughout this chapter, I approach dystopian young adult fiction as a site of extracurricular rhetorical education, treating the discussion questions that accompany novels in this genre as epitexts which work to guide readers through those novels in particular ways. As a strategy for reading and analyzing these questions, I trace what I identify as the cognitive and the affective pedagogical impulses in these questions, though I acknowledge the artificiality and the limitations of this schema. Through my readings, I highlight the unique ways that affect works to orient young people to the world, naturalize those orientations, and help readers develop particular kinds of habits and intuitions, and I contextualize that training in this social, cultural, and political economic moment. More specifically, I call attention to the power and influence affect can exert through its circulations in the neoliberal world.

What I offer here is a starting point, and much work remains to be done with regards to young adult novels, dystopian YA, and discussion questions. The mystery around the production of YA discussion questions, for example, remains to be solved. I attend here only to the discussion questions included with dystopian YA, and even then only to a small handful of dystopian YA novels. There is much more that we can learn about what discussion questions do in other kinds of YA texts by expanding these investigations into other YA genres. Other important ways to extend this research would include investigating who uses discussion questions and how they use them, and to consider other pedagogical programs—curricular and extracurricular—which have developed around dystopian YA.[24]

At the core of this project is my belief that the questions that we ask, and the work that we prompt students and readers to engage in, matters in ways that we have not sufficiently studied. When we ask readers to empathize with a character or to imagine themselves in some fictionalized scenario, we direct their attention and their energy in particular ways. As we attune students in these ways, we help them to "break in" specific patterns of engagement in the world. This is an affective pedagogy. In the conclusion that follows, I extend this thesis further and make a case for pushing the limits of rhetorical education by taking affect seriously in our classrooms and in our

[24] One initiative that comes to mind is the "Odds in Our Favor" campaign, sponsored by the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA). The HPA in a nonprofit activist and advocacy organization, inspired by the *Harry Potter* series, which aims to "turn fans into heroes." Through its campaigns, it spreads awareness of social issues, raises money and supplies for various causes, and more. "Odds in Our Favor" involved circulating issues of economic inequality, organizing protests to demand pay increases for service industry workers, and addressing the intersectional nature of economic justice by partnering with organizations like #BlackLivesMatter ("Odds"). While decidedly different from discussion questions, [I think "this campaign" should appear immediately after the comma; the rest of the sentence would need to be tweaked, too.] approaching this campaign as another site of noninstitutional rhetorical education, and considering how affect works pedagogically within it, might offer us new insights into youth and their civic engagement in the neoliberal age. See Alexander, *Writing* (11, 14) and the "Media, Activism, and Participatory Politics" project website for scholarship on the HPA.

disciplinary imaginations. I consider how we might revise critical pedagogy in a way that honors our investments in youth, the power of affect, and the political potential of creativity and invention.

CHAPTER FIVE, CONCLUSION

Political Sensations: Toward a Critical Affective Pedagogy

Youth is central to the work of teaching, and especially to the teaching of writing. Attending to the figure of youth—paying attention to what enters our disciplinary conversations and our classrooms through youth—is thus an essential project. By tracing youth through sites of rhetorical education over the last seventy years, I have worked to demonstrate the importance of doing this work and to highlight some of the significant lessons we can glean from it.

I want to briefly recap those lessons here: Returning to the Life Adjustment movement of the 1950s in chapter two called our attention to the interrelatedness of the figure of youth and the logics of capitalism. The reform made explicit the connections between getting an education and minimizing one's liability to oneself and to others. It approached students as citizens-in-progress, and articulated the responsibility of the school in preparing young people, affectively and otherwise, to successfully inhabit their roles in a democratic and capitalist society. Debates circulated in response to the reform about whether preparing good citizens meant helping students to fit a mold and adjust to the status quo or teaching them so that they might buck the mold, follow their own paths, and adjust the world to their vision of it. A similar tension persists in rhetorical education today, as we debate what kinds of literacy skills students need to learn, what transfer means and who it is good for, and what the political functions of our pedagogy should be in our cultural, historical, and political economic moment. In chapter three, following youth through three culturally engaged composition textbooks from the 1990s

offered us insights into how different ways of indexing and figuring youth could enable, and preclude, various kinds of pedagogical projects. While each of these textbooks imagined their work as empowering students in some way, the specific objectives and directives of their ventures diverged, informed by how the textbook's authors figured students. More specifically, the ways that the textbooks' authors conceived of students' relationships to consumer capitalism influenced the books' pedagogical ambitions and practices. Turning to discussion question sets included with three recent dystopian YA novels in chapter four highlighted for us the affective dimensions of rhetorical education, one of the ways that young people may learn to embody a sort of "neoliberal normal." In directing readers' attention and "nudging" readers toward specific readings of the books, the discussion question sets perform a kind of affective pedagogy. Affect, of course, does not always work to inculcate readers with capitalist values, but as we see the persuasiveness of the medium at work in the discussion sets, we ought to recognize the importance of paying attention to the kinds of affect that move and the routes they take through our prompts and activities.

I conclude this dissertation by suggesting a different way that youth might animate our field. In the previous chapters, youth's sense of being "in progress" worked to structure the scenes of rhetorical education I visited; such practices therefore emphasized futurity and took as one of its goals the minimization of liability and the maximization of preparation as it trained students to take on the world that awaited them. Here, I want to suggest that rhetorical education—and critical rhetorical education in particular—could benefit from embracing other aspects of youth: play, imagination, rebelliousness, stubbornness, passion. Rather than rushing youth along toward

maturity, such a pedagogy would find ways through rhetorical work to suspend, to slow, to wander. Here, as I sketch out the beginnings of this sort of pedagogy, I embrace too a different dimension of affect. Where in earlier chapters, I have attended primarily to how affect, porous and ever in motion, can function disciplinarily, picking up through its circulations the neoliberal values which saturate our moment and helping to distribute them, building habits and promoting orientations that would help to naturalize capitalism, here I want to key into affect's untethered-ness, its spontaneity and unpredictability, and the exciting potential for invention that lies within it. I work to read affect as, while still an influential and pedagogical force, one that can teach and share a more open sensibility and a disposition for letting go and for welcoming the unknown. Such a pedagogy will not guarantee radical results, but it has the potential to radically disrupt, even if only momentarily, the neoliberal educational model which dominates today, accounting for students, imposing measurement criteria on learning, and investing in students as units of human capital, bolstering them for the economy.

My interest in affective experimentation of this sort comes from my exhaustion with critique, and from my fear after studying neoliberalism that no matter the intellectual resources we throw at it, we may not be able to think our way out of or around it. In this conclusion, I work through an admittedly provisional response to the question of what critical work might need to look like now, tentatively drawing out how through rhetorical work and rhetorical education we might challenge, or at least unsettle, neoliberalism's tight hold on our everyday. I explore what might become possible when we give space to these facets of youth—the willingness to play, creative freedom, an inclination toward imagination—as part of a critical pedagogy for the neoliberal moment. While I

acknowledge that creativity, imagination, and play have already been embraced as corporate strategies in this stage of capitalism and that "youthiness" has proven to be a profitable characteristic for neoliberal markets, I maintain that the affective is capacious enough to accommodate new kinds of critical work. In what remains of this chapter, I probe the heart of critical pedagogy, building from existing feminist critiques of the tradition to suggest new potential goals and directions for critical education. I highlight scholarship on affect that calls attention to its unique relationship to invention and make a case for tuning into sensation and felt experiences. I situate affect's pedagogical potential in the context of neoliberalism before turning to three examples of other scholars' teaching and making practices which encourage students and teachers to give themselves over to affective encounters. I extract from these examples some tactics for a critical affect pedagogy before I close with suggestions for future directions for this kind of work.

Thinking through Critical Pedagogy and Rhetorical Education

Before venturing to describe a critical affect pedagogy, it is worth pausing to think about critical pedagogy itself, its practices and its goals. Alexandre Guilherme, writing in the introduction to a special issue of *Policy Futures in Education* on critical pedagogy, argues that Plato and Socrates first advocated for a critical pedagogy by "challeng[ing] [their] student[s] to think critically about educational, social and philosophical issues" (3). His definition aligns critical pedagogy with critical thinking, treating the two as synonymous. Peter McLaren, one of critical pedagogy's most prolific and recognizable figures, has noted the diverse array of educational projects which have fallen under the

rubric of *a* critical pedagogy, thusly defined. In an interview with *Global Education Magazine*, he offers this laundry list of objectives articulated by self-identified critical pedagogues:

> to foment dialogue, to deepen our appreciation of public life, to create spaces of respect and appreciation for diversity, to encourage critical thinking, to build culturally sensitive curricula, to create a vibrant democratic public sphere, to try to change the hardened hearts and minds of our increasingly parasitic financial aristocracy, to build knowledge from the experiences and the histories of students themselves, to make knowledge relevant to the lives of students and to encourage students to theorize and make sense of their experiences in order to break free from the systems of mediation that limit their understanding of the world and their capacity to transform it, to challenge racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, to fight against white supremacy, etc. ("Critical")

McLaren's list adds to the definition of *a* critical pedagogy an affiliation with critique and a sense of social urgency. Critical pedagogical projects represent efforts to apply theory to the world at large and, through that application, to work toward specific, transformational goals which might make the world more just and equitable. That critical pedagogical projects take on a variety of forms and that they are flexible in focus, approach, and method are essential and defining characteristics of this work. Heterogeneity in philosophy and methodology "emphasize[s] that there does not exist a formula" (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 9) for critical pedagogy. At the heart of a critical pedagogy is a "commit[ment] to the idea and practice of social justice within schools,

[and] to the transformation of social structures and class conditions within society that thwart the democratic participation of all people" (2).

Critical pedagogy also names a more formal field of study, one with a more direct relationship to political economic critique and to literacy education. Critical pedagogy, "as a theory and a distinct field of study" (Guilherme 3), emerged in the 1960s and 1970s out of Paulo Freire's liberatory educational work with disenfranchised peasants in Brazil. Freire's students, denied access to literacy education, found themselves limited both functionally and legally; to vote, they needed to be literate, and as they could not participate in their own governance, they had been unable to alter their political conditions. Rather than imposing a literacy program onto his students, however, Freire immersed himself in their communities, learning from them about their experiences of oppression. Critical of what he termed the "banking model of education," Freire refused the idea that a student is an empty vessel, waiting to be filled with knowledge. He honored students' knowledges and intelligences, and insisted that the teacher is also, always, a learner in the classroom. Freire imagined learners in need of direction and support through which he[25] might activate his own knowledge in service of his own liberation.

Freirean pedagogy came to the U.S. and jumpstarted the more formal field of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogues in this tradition drew from and adopted Freire's "Marxist analysis of educational systems" (Guilherme 4), his attention to local educational contexts and constraints, and his ambitions of helping students to gain more power and agency in oppressive systems. Antonia Darder, Marta P. Baltodano,

[25] For more on gender and Freire, see Olson.

and Rodolfo D. Torres, writing in the introduction to the third edition of *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, note that long after Freire, critical pedagogy "remain[s] … rooted to the actual material conditions and ideological structures of everyday life and conscious of the historical, political, and economic landscapes" through their deep and "rigorous examination into societal concerns that inherently give rise to the process of schooling" (3).

Some rhetorical educators, recognizing the similarities between critical pedagogy's practices and goals and those of the teaching of writing, embrace Freirean pedagogy. James Berlin, for instance, makes the case for critical pedagogy in the writing classroom, arguing that, like rhetoric and composition scholars, Freire "sees in the mediating power of language the possibility for the change and transformation" of concrete material and social conditions ("Freirean Pedagogy" 414). Echoing Freire, Berlin maintains that "in teaching people to write and read, we [rhetoric and composition instructors] are teaching them a way of experiencing the world" (417). Patricia Bizzell, in an essay honoring Freire after his death in 1997, writes that "Freire's most important idea for composition instruction in the United States is the concept of 'critical consciousness'"; "in the Freirean classroom," she notes, "as students acquire better literate abilities, they are encouraged to use them for the projects of progressive social change that their education is making them increasingly desire" (319). While Bizzell notes some "problems" with the uptake of critical pedagogy in rhetoric and composition—namely the divorce of "radical political critique" from "the act of interpretation" (320), and the leap-of-faith involved in getting from a literacy program to "a desire for progressive political change" (320)—Freirean critical pedagogy, she

argues, “point[s] us in the right direction” (322). C.H. Knoblauch agrees, noting that “[Freire’s] work is valuable to us for the larger vision of freedom that it embodies, the democratic commitments it has sought to realize in specific, localized social action” (412). Many other compositionists have also recognized the goals and assumptions shared by both critical pedagogy and rhetorical education. The nature of the pedagogical practices which have emerged from this union, however, has been much debated. Through their work, scholars including Russel Durst (“Can”; *Collision*), Bruce McComiskey, Mike Rose (*Lives*), John Schilb, Ira Shor, William H. Thelin (“Understanding”; “William”), and James Zebroski (“Critical”), have tussled over whether critical pedagogy empowers students to define their own goals or helps them to gain specific critical perspectives; what sharing power in the classroom with students might look like and what it might accomplish; whether the focus of critical composition classes should be critical analysis or student production; and more. While these disciplinary exchanges have been rich and productive, it is not within the scope of this conclusion to trace the nuances throughout them.

What is central to the project of drafting a critical affect pedagogy are a few key propositions, insights I have extracted from scholarship across the fields of critical pedagogy and rhetoric and composition. First, critical pedagogy, and therefore a critical rhetorical education, is a response to capitalism, a praxis designed to challenge capitalism’s hegemony and its power to define social relations. Second, because critical pedagogy and rhetorical education share an interest in the development of practices and behaviors which promote individual and community agency in public affairs, students and teachers in a critical rhetorical education classroom have an opportunity to

reorient themselves to the world, to denaturalize and reconfigure normalized social habits, in potentially radical ways. Third, because critical pedagogy and rhetorical education take as their domain the everyday, critical rhetorical educators can draw from and work in and through the lived experiences of students and ground their inquiries and their experiments in the local and specific, the immediate and the embodied.

Critical Pedagogy and the Function of Feelings

The coming together of critical pedagogy and affect here may seem merely convenient, but in fact, critical pedagogy is, at its roots, deeply invested in feeling. In the preface of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire begins with feeling. Describing his teaching work in Brazil, he calls attention to participants' "*fear* of freedom" (35, emphasis mine) as a potential roadblock on their path to liberation. Feeling is also an end of critical pedagogy for Freire: literacy leads to liberation and liberation to humanization, the return of human dignity to the oppressed, a product of love. In Freirean pedagogy, love is essential. Love is dialogue, courage, and commitment to others. It is the "cause of liberation" (89). This sort of radical love is not sentimental or transactional but rather generative and revolutionary; love, as an "act of freedom" (90), begets other acts of love. Liberated through love, the oppressed, once seen as "disaffected" by their oppressors, "initiate [more] love," disrupting the cycle of violence and "restoring to the oppressors [their] humanity" (56).

Despite the centrality of affect in this seminal text, critical pedagogy as it has been taken up and implemented in classrooms has a more complicated relationship with emotions. Feminist scholars in particular have documented these complexities and

traced their consequences. Elizabeth Ellsworth, for example, has argued that critical pedagogy is a fundamentally rationalist project, one that limits the goals of critical teaching by “guarantee[ing] that the foundation for classroom interaction is reason” (303–4). Under critical pedagogy’s rationalist assumptions, she argues, “only one ‘political’ gesture appears to be available to the critical pedagogue. S/he can ensure that students are given the chance to arrive logically at the ‘universally valid proposition’ … that all people have a right to freedom from oppression” (303–4). This limiting of critical political objectives, Ellsworth argues, abstracts the “lesson” of critical pedagogy to the point of uselessness. What is worse, it relies on “a discursive practice” whose “regulated and systematic use of elements of language constitutes rational competence ‘as a series of exclusions—of women, people of color, of nature as historical agent, of the true value of art’” (304). Critical pedagogy, Ellsworth warns, can thereby perpetuate injustice by requiring critical teachers and students to internalize the habits and the values of an oppressive system as part of their education against oppression.

K. Hyoejin Yoon has also argued that critical pedagogy fails at times to meet its critical promises. In her account, however, it is “[c]ritical pedagogy’s rhetoric of affect” that “potentially [serves] exclusionary and ultimately conservative ends” (745). Yoon is concerned primarily with how “the discourse of critical pedagogy … disciplin[es] teacher affect” (718). Playing on teachers’ “noble sentiments,” critical pedagogy “call[s] on [the teacher] to promote and uphold Western culture’s highest and noblest ideals,” despite the fact that “[those] ideals have not always (indeed, rarely have) been applied or mobilized equally for everyone” (718–9). While Yoon concedes that “[e]motions … constitute an important part of the ethical substance of the would-be transformative

intellectual” (740–1), she rejects the singular model for that intellectual, which emerges from critical pedagogy texts. This ideal, she argues, “maintains the privileged position of the masculine *ethos* in the voice of the theorist and inadvertently reaffirms the dominance of whiteness and maleness” (741). The affective disciplining of teachers through critical pedagogy puts affect in service of ideological projects. Yoon notes too that while critical pedagogues talk about affect as revolutionary and revolution as affective, affect is often treated in critical pedagogical practices as an “object of critique, revision, and ultimately, purging” (722). These pedagogical interventions focus on “tak[ing] … irrationality and mak[ing] sense of it, find[ing] the causes and the reasons for it” (“Affecting” 721). The praxis of critical teaching then does not involve affect but rather works to analyze, dissect, and deconstruct it.

Ilene Crawford makes the case that affect can do empowering work, but that in order to access affect’s potential, we need to open up our critical pedagogical canon. “We need to continue to look for writers who can broaden our understanding of how hegemonic struggle is powerfully engaged on an affective level,” she contends (683). Such a project means, for Crawford, tuning into “the work of writers,” especially “African-American writers such as [Cornell] West and [bell] hooks,” “who use their affective stances to create agency” (683). By discussing “affective interventions” (683) with students, Crawford argues, teachers can help students orient their own affective stances, taking cues from “intellectual and cultural traditions like and unlike their own” (683). Such work offers students opportunities to build new affective relationships and to approach affect as an agentive medium situated within larger contexts. For Crawford, emotions are “more than something to which rhetors appeal” and “more, even, than

‘evidence for knowing’” (678). Rather, emotions constitute “ontological action,” “performances,” “vantage point[s] from which to make meaning of the world around us” (678). Crawford puts it succinctly: “Our affective stances … give us agency” (678).

Composing (Ourselves) in the Neoliberal Moment

While this review is far from comprehensive, Ellsworth’s, Yoon’s, and Crawford’s critiques call our attention to opportunities available to us to revise affect’s role in contemporary critical pedagogy. They illustrate that while affect can be absent from critical pedagogy or at odds with critical pedagogical aims, it is nonetheless a powerful force, one with the potential to transform individuals and social relations. These critiques emerge from and are animated by poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminism, postcolonialism, and other scholarly traditions. I argue here that a different kind of -ism, neoliberalism, offers a new impetus for this kind of critical work.

As I have contended throughout this project, neoliberalism is a particularly insidious form of capitalism, one which spreads, in part, by distributing economic logics across social spaces. Neoliberalism, according to David Harvey, has co-opted common sense (2), transforming the ways that we engage one another and the world. Wendy Brown has written at length about the damaging effects of neoliberalism as the new “normative order of reason” (10), arguing that human subjectivity and sociality are rewritten under neoliberalism’s influence, leading us to understand ourselves and others as units of human capital. It is easy to recognize this co-opting of “common sense,” “discourse,” “rationality,” and “reason” when we consider how we organize and *value* our lives: what we *invest* in, how we *take stock* of things or *account* for ourselves or

others, when we give *due credit*, what we are *indebted to*, how we *spend* our time and energy. As I alluded to earlier, I have found myself tripping over the same conundrum time and again: When rationality and signification are so wrapped up in capitalism, how can we think our way out of this moment? What can writing, talking, and teaching do to help us find our way through something so deeply a part of who we now are?

It is from this seeming impasse that I suggest a turn to affect. In doing so, I do not mean to throw out logic completely or to suggest that thinking and feeling can be disentangled from one another. I mean instead to argue for a reframing of our conception of and approach to affect. Rather than studying affect, I suggest we think of affect as a force of and for production. Rather than treating our emotions or lived experiences as a starting point for theorizing or researching, in proposing a critical affect pedagogy, I propose we dwell in the affective, finding ways to work from, in, and through it. Other scholars have "call[ed] for us to see emotion 'as one feature of meaning making equal to other features, and thereby deserving of a legitimate role in pedagogical settings'" (qtd. in Martorana). What might happen, I wonder, if we let affect take more of the lead?

Where critique in critical pedagogy seems to have, as Ellsworth argues, a predetermined end, affective experience does not demand directive certainty. Affect belongs to the present, and because of its immediacy (Berlant; Massumi, "Autonomy"; Massumi, *Power*), it does not occasion a rational plan of action, a clearly articulated process, or a means of assessing progress. Affect is shared and social. As Lauren Berlant and Sara Ahmed have demonstrated, affect is pedagogical. We learn through our experiences and encounters, building habits through repetition. Scholars like

Catherine Chaput have shown how affect's ability to move—to, in Ahmed's words, slide across and stick in various contexts—gives it persuasive edge in the neoliberal world and permits "lessons" learned affectively to transfer in ways that lessons learned through reason cannot. I posit, then, that in affect, we might find ways to disrupt capitalism's regularly scheduled programming and to alter social patterns and orientations which permit its dominance. Through affect, we might prompt new and transformative kinds of writing or facilitate new and transformative ways of teaching that precipitate new and transformative ways of living. Or, at least, affect might offer us our best shot.

Considering affect and emotion in the writing classroom is not a new proposition. Not only can we trace *pathos* back to our field's ancient rhetorical roots and through thousands of years of rhetorical history, but scholars and teachers also continue to think about and write about the role of feelings in rhetorical education today. Elsewhere in this dissertation, I have described some of this work, particularly that which brings together the study of affect and neoliberal critique. But other scholarship has been published in the field too that is more oriented to praxis. A few examples of that work can be found in a recent special issue of *Composition Forum* on emotions, guest edited by Lance Langdon, in a section devoted to what Langdon calls "Assignments in Emotional Literacy." Here, composition teachers share projects that ask students to merge their emotional lives, and their thinking about emotions, with their writing.

One project, contributed by Christine Martorana, asks students to first record their emotional reactions to an injustice they have witnessed. The assignment then guides students to process their emotional experiences through research, working to

make sense of their feelings through outside sources. Finally, students are asked to imagine a more ideal world, one where such an injustice would not take place and such bad affects would not need to be experienced, and to render that world in writing. “[B]y highlighting the interconnectedness of emotion and reason within the composition classroom,” Martorana argues, “we can better support our students’ development as emotionally literate writers—that is, as writers capable of using their emotional experiences to discursively interact with the world around them.” Another assignment sequence, offered by Roseanne Carlo, prompts students to key into the emotional consequences of their literacy journeys. Carlo asks students to report about moments when they felt good or bad about the literacies they were acquiring and to record cultural attitudes toward literacy that they observed, shared, or experienced. Through this work, Carlo hopes to challenge the uncomplicated positivity and success story plot which dominate the literacy narrative and to make space for “stories that may contain ‘outlaw’ emotions like loss and pain,” thereby thickening our field’s understanding of literacy. A third assignment, submitted by Jennifer Campbell, describes students investigating “mental health and happiness as objects of academic inquiry” through primary and secondary research. Motivated by a desire to do more “to help *all* of [her] students develop a better understanding of mental health and of ways to improve their own well-being” (emphasis original), Campbell describes how she infused this research project with principles from positive psychology; for instance, “the structure of this unit supports the five elements of authentic well-being outlined by Seligman: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment.”

While such projects are interesting for their engagement with the emotional dimensions of research and writing, and while they respond smartly to calls from scholars like Lynn Worsham, Laura Micciche (*Doing*), Shari Stenberg ("Teaching"), and others to take emotion seriously in the rhetorical education classroom, their engagement with feeling and their goals differ from those of a critical affect pedagogy. In these assignment sequences, emotions function as the *object* of study, and the dominant impulse is to *make sense* of emotion, to process it, or to use it as a jumping off point for a project of analysis or critique. Martorana's final writing assignment, which asks students to imagine an alternative future, creates space for imaginative production, though that project is informed by more traditional research, which exists as an intermediary step between students' affective reports and their exploratory work. A critical affect pedagogy foregrounds affect and gives affect permission to guide and direct rhetorical projects, to do some of the heavy lifting of rhetorical production.

In "Teaching as Possibility: A Light in Dark Times," Maxine Greene suggests that the heart of critical pedagogy is imagination, the ability to create alternatives to the social status quo. "Imagination," she argues, "alters the vision of the way things are; it opens spaces in experience where projects can be devised, the kinds of projects that may bring things closer to what they ought to be" (496). For Greene, this sort of imaginative work leans on affect, as sensory experiences awaken people, jolting them toward new insights. She notes that "[i]magination … is enriched and stimulated through encounters with others, through exposure to diverse vantage points and unfamiliar ways of looking at the world" (497). In the first ever issue of *Capacious: A Journal for*

Emerging Affect Inquiry, editor Gregory Seigworth highlights the inventive potential of affect study. He writes,

> [T]he study of affect stakes out a place in the numerous incoherences that texturize a world. Recognizing that untangling or separating-out and critical distancing are not always the only or best available options, affect study frequently chooses to "middle out" by wading into the ambient overdeterminations of existence and the energies that move (or impede, swerve, etc.) bodies (of all kinds) in the very midst of their activity. … [O]ne modest aim of affect study [should] be: to make or foster along, even if the barest ripple across the surface, a more expansive ongoing-ness. … And while that is never enough ..., it can be a start, this making room. This capacious-ness. (iv-v)

Turning to affect can be a radical, critical endeavor. Affect, as the felt manifestation of the real conditions of everyday life, does not shy away from politics; rather, it is steeped in them. And yet, affect does not require that we try to *understand* those conditions or *respond*. Rather, it invites us to *react* (move, impede, swerve) or not (muddle in, middle out); to invent; to imagine; and to make or foster expansiveness—even if that expansiveness exists only as a tiny temporal, spatial blip.

What we need, I am arguing, are pedagogies that invite different habits, attitudes, ways of moving and being in the world; pedagogies that do more than yield reflection and analysis; pedagogies that do not privilege mastery and understanding; pedagogies that invent new pathways forward. In what remains of this chapter, I offer three examples of rhetorical interventions and pedagogical projects that do more than *attend*

to affect, and that instead *use* affect in critical ways. I propose ways of reading and understanding these practices as ones that honor the pedagogic force of affect and engage the critical potential latent in affect's capacity for invention.

Critical Affect Pedagogy: Lessons in Action

The Situationists Go Digital

The first of these examples comes from Jonathan Alexander and Jackie Rhodes's *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies*. In this book, Alexander and Rhodes argue for more critical attention to the crossroads of multimodality and composition. Concerned about the loss of specificity and nuance in composition's uptake of various multimedia, the authors suggest that writers and teachers of writing need to be willing to push on the practices of "traditional composition" and be open to "exploring how multimodality challenges our rhetorical predispositions in privileging print textualities" (4). "[W]e need to ask about other possibilities for expression, for representation, for communicating meaning, for making knowledge," they insist; "We need to ask about possibilities that may exceed those of the letter, the text-based, the author, the *composed*" (4, emphasis original).

While Alexander and Rhodes are not explicitly interested in affect, their commitment to epistemological openness and to rhetorical possibilities both on and off the page align with the values and practices of a critical affect pedagogy. Two rhetorical activities from this text, both inspired by the Situationist International movement, illustrate what a critical affective approach to rhetorical production might look like in action. First, Alexander and Rhodes describe digital "queer *détournement*," "a prosumer

approach to and generative rhetoric of photo manipulation, specifically around issues of gender and its figuration in public discourse" (110). Through digital mashups reconfiguring gendered bodies and heads or mocking and mocking up images of intimate encounters, the authors "[create] a curious, evocative space"; elicit, or even provoke, embodied reactions in others; and "[create] a workable space for feminist and queer *technai* of self" (111). A separate practice, a *dérive* through computer game worlds, likewise embraces disorientation, reorientation, and movement which rejects prescriptive direction. In the gaming *dérive*, the "opening up [of] new ways of conceiving mass market games by playing them against themselves and in ways far from the intentions of game designers" (25), Alexander and Rhodes recognize how "norms [can be] questioned, the possibility for expression enhanced, and alternate paths of meaning encountered and explored" (154). While the *dérives* Alexander and Rhodes study here are often very thoughtfully supported through manifestos or written critiques, the activities themselves, the appropriating and the wandering, illustrate a kind of free movement through (cyber) space, a going through letting go.

In accounting for these practices, Alexander and Rhodes are interested in attending to the specific affordances of these media, including their affordances for creative approaches to critical work. My interest in these practices is in their open-endedness, their challenges to normal states of being, and their potential to produce something new, something not immediately legible or useful. A critical affect pedagogy, like these practices, would welcome possibilities that lie in unanticipated discoveries. It would invite, to borrow Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's phrase, some "loosing" up (3). A critical affect pedagogy would, like these *détournements* and *dérives*,

encourage opportunities to inhabit life, space, and time differently, or, more radically, to shape life, space, and time, at least temporarily, into something different.

Follow Your Gut

The second practice I want to highlight here comes from Steven Alvarez, whose "Taco Literacies: Ethnography, Foodways, and Emotions through Mexican Food Writing," was published in the aforementioned *Composition Forum* special issue. Building from Ben Highmore's concept of "sensual pedagogy," Alvarez describes an assignment sequence he uses to "connect learning through the senses with aesthetic and critical orchestration of taste as a locus of meaning." Rather than a training of tastes, Alvarez's project asks students to explore a location by listening to and following their sensory experiences through their city. Students create a photo-essay reviewing a local Mexican restaurant. Their essay, Alvarez tells them, should "capture aspects of taste and emotion connected to food literacies and the location," and their photos "should … tell a story that gives voice to flavors." Students later evaluate other reviews of the same restaurant and then interview members of the community about their relationship to food and to the restaurant.

What Alvarez emphasizes about the project is the power of witnessing students name their journeys into local Mexican food and its adaptations. He cites, for example, his interest in a student's "disgust" for a local ballpark's whitewashed "Extreme Churro" dessert. In his reflections on the project, Alvarez imagines ways that taco literacies might open up conversations with students about "social justice and the political economy of food production." In other words, Alvarez sees taco literacies as a kind of

sensory ice breaker, a way of warming students up to more traditional forms of critique. What is exciting to me about the project, however, and what is most useful in this example for fleshing out a critical affect pedagogy, is the invitation for students to follow their noses and their taste buds and to capture their affective experiences in writing and in photography. Put differently, this project foregrounds sensation. As with the *dérive*, this project makes space for students to potentially invent new ways of occupying their bodies and their locations. It helps them orient themselves differently to the world they may have already "figured out" through spice, through the pleasure (or displeasure) of food, and through new encounters with places and people on unusual, nonroutine pretenses. What is particularly exciting about this project too are its possibilities for producing new kinds of social bonds amongst people. Taco literacies require engaging with others, create opportunities for shared sensory experiences, and promote new kinds of interaction, new kinds of friction, in spaces.

Do Your Civic Desire

The final rhetorical practice I want to explore here similarly focuses on forging new kinds of social bonds. In her retrospective chapter on the work of Gerald Hauser, Lisa Storm Villadsen introduces Borgerlyst, or Civic Desire, a "social laboratory" initiative in Copenhagen, Denmark. The brainchild of Nadja Press and Andreas Lloyd, Civic Desire is "an informal and voluntary, non-profit, non-political, open-source community" designed to "foster and strengthen the appetite for community involvement independent of formal organizations or political parties" (10). Villadsen describes two Civic Desire initiatives, though I focus here on just one: the conversation salon.

Conversation salons are free, open events organized by anyone—not necessarily a Civic Desire founder or representative. They bring people together in "public or semi-public spaces" for a few hours, where a host facilitates "conversation 'exercises'" (10). One exercise, the "Stance Barometer," proposes a topic related to the salon's theme and asks people to line up in order of their agreement/identification (or disagreement/disidentification) with a statement about that topic. Individuals are invited to testify from their position, and participants can change their position in the line as appropriate. Another exercise at the conversation salon, "Conversation Menu," involves a host handing out a card of questions to individuals and inviting them to move about the space, talking through the questions with each other.

Villadsen's interest in Civic Desire is as "an example of a vernacular public sphere" and "a form of [preparatory] rhetorical citizenship" (12). She sees Civic Desire, in other words, as a sort of training ground for and stepping stone to other, more formal kinds of civic participation (debate, voting, etc.). What I find most compelling about Civic Desire—other than its name, which Villadsen tells us is a Danish play on "civic duty" that translates poorly, and its reliance on the metaphor of eating in describing conversation—is how the organization focuses on "creating social innovation" (10). Civic Desire events do not concentrate on specific political issues, nor do they coincide with major elections. They are not directly about strategizing, solving problems, or persuading others (11). Civic Desire is divorced from research and planning. Instead, Civic Desire "constantly emphasize[s] its experimental and exploratory nature" (13) as it works to affect participants. While Civic Desire obviously hopes to encourage citizens to participate in civic affairs, the organization's activities function more as orientations to

community relationships. Their events do not build on one another, and there are no assessment mechanisms to measure the events' success. While the dialogic and discursive interactions Civic Desire facilitates are commendable, what is potentially more powerful about Civic Desire, and more instructive for a critical affect pedagogy, is how it brings bodies together into a space and invites them to move amongst and bump against one another under novel conditions. Civic Desire orchestrates a gathering without the productive pressure of collaboration, collectivity without the need to define the boundaries or the aims of the collective. As such, Civic Desire creates opportunities for affective invention, of a sort that might not be anticipatable, replicable, or even immediately recognizable.

Conclusion

These examples, treated only cursorily here, exemplify the kinds of practices which could constitute a critical affect pedagogy. They make clearer too some of the values such a pedagogy would encourage: the letting go of specific objectives and directions; an open-mindedness and willingness to wander and to explore; freedom from measurable assessments; attention to embodied experiences; a welcoming of disruption and disorientation as a means of making space for the new; and a receptiveness to the weird.

In her contribution to *Composition Studies in the New Millennium: Rereading the Past, Rewriting the Future*, Wendy Bishop recounts the experience of mistakenly distributing to her class a syllabus missing critical information. Where it should have had a description of the semester-long journal entry requirements, her syllabus read,

> For all assigned chapters, please do the following: [Here [her] students found a great big BLANK—no directions at all.] Although you're welcome and encouraged to make additional entries, please be aware that these are public journals. That is, at times, peers will be reading them. *Please bring your journal to each class*. (Bishop 66, brackets and italics original)

The following week, Bishop asked her students to work in groups to design their own prompts. One group could not reach a consensus and was directed to email Bishop their individual suggestions. Only one student did, late. His suggested prompt read, in part, like this:

> Each journal entry should reflect a wide range of expressions on a specific personal focus which begins, ideally, with strictly the empirical form (e.g., face, hands, navel, etc.) employing wide ranges of media if necessary to convey an image either visual (pictures, words, random colors, hell even video), auditory (short recordings of sleep, songs of original composition which could be written or recorded), olfactory (the verbal expression of the skin exposed to metal, collected scents, b/o), or digital (glued in textures that resemble/elucidate on what it feels like to be one's self). These entries will hopefully grow from there into complex and intimate verbal representations of the personal emotions one feels with the various parts of one's self (e.g., frustration with my stationary mouth). (67–8)

Stunned by the student's reply, Bishop wondered "whether the writer was feeling facetious, playful, stoned, exploratory, sloppy, or serious" and debated whether "this response [was] bullshit and should [she] address it as such?" (68). While she chalked

her initial discomfort with the student's response up to teacher burnout, her unease also speaks to the tacit boundaries and expectations for composition, especially in academic spaces, that declare that good writing should be readily received, processed, and used. How can a student's reflections on his navel help him write better in his chemistry courses? What would his business professor, and someday his boss, care for recordings of his sleeping?

A critical affect pedagogy would embrace the legible and the illegible, the useful and the excessive. It would say yes: to blank prompts that disrupt the flow of a class; to journals which try to capture and communicate what it is like to live, to move, to be in this moment; to writing which encompasses the empirical *and* the mediated *and* the auditory *and* the olfactory *and* the digital *and* the emotional. In a rhetorical education, a critical affect pedagogy might involve multimodal composition; freeform composition; rhetorical production off the page, *in situ*, and in motion; writing to communicate experiences; writing to produce experiences; genre play; and more. While such practices have not been talked about specifically in this way, scholars in composition and rhetoric have already begun to shake up what they perceive of as stale and too stable models for writing. Paula Mathieu has located this kind of work in community-based and public writing, describing it as writing for life, "writing as a tool for living." She cites Kristi Girdharry's project to "[help] build an archive of the Boston marathon bombing—people's responses, their memories at the moment" (Minnix) and Robert P. Yagelski's *Writing as a Way of Being*, which explores the transformative power of the act, not the product of writing, as examples of this kind of shift. The further

development of a critical affect pedagogy might add to these conversations and offer different theoretical inlets into them.

Throughout this final chapter, I have worked to articulate why an affective critical pedagogy is critical in this moment, to bring critical pedagogy and affect closer together, and to assert affect's own political and pedagogical potential—a potential that need not rely on rational processing, reflecting, and or even planning. I have argued that affect, because of the space it creates for invention outside of currently articulatable (or even known) possibilities, may give us the foothold we need to poke our heads, even if momentarily, out of the neoliberal thick of it all. As I have only just begun to imagine what a critical affect pedagogy is and what it might do, much work on the project remains to be done. Before such a concept could be of use to the field, we would, of course, need a clearer and more concrete sense of what a critical affect pedagogy would entail. I am currently developing an upper-division expository writing class that will trouble dominant ideas of exposition and research and try to make space for affect, embodied experience, and, more generally, play. Trying out such a course will certainly help me to develop this work. As I push on the limits of rhetorical production, I am imagining too a new scholarly project, one wherein I record my experiences transitioning from life as a graduate student into life as a faculty member. Through journals, recordings, sketches, and other media, I mean to capture this moment in time. How that work will take shape, where it will take me, and where it will end up are, as they should be, to be determined. As it develops, this project will benefit from, amongst other things, more robust engagement with the writing for life movement; a more thorough linking of this work with existing political economic critiques (N. Welch; Scott;

Stenberg, “Beyond”; Stenberg, *Repurposing*); and a deeper consideration of the relationship between this sort of teaching and other critical practices, including those from critical pedagogy, feminist theory, and queer theory. Revisiting other moments in rhetoric and composition’s history, especially expressivism, can also only make this project stronger.

I recognize the rawness of this work, and I note that this conclusion, rather than concluding one inquiry, initiates another—indefinite and speculative. It nonetheless feels like the right place to close a dissertation about what our field can learn from paying closer attention to the figure of youth: it is fledgling, audacious, in the moment, and perhaps a little foolhardy. Still, as Mathieu reminds us, uncertainty is part of Utopia. “It’s not that [we]’re going to get it right,” she insists. “[B]ut we need something completely different to get us out of the moment of the now” (Minnix). And so, we brace ourselves. We embrace the unknown. And, perhaps, we begin feeling our way through neoliberalism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Alexander, Jonathan. "Pedagogic Not Didactic: Michael Cart on Young Adult Fiction." *Los Angeles Review of Book*s, 22 May 2018.

---. *Writing Youth: Young Adult Fiction as Literacy Sponsorship*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016.

Alexander, Jonathan, and Rebecca Black. "The Darker Side of the Sorting Hat: Representations of Educational Testing in Dystopian Young Adult Fiction." *Children's Literature* 43 (2015): 208–34.

Alexander, Jonathan, and Jacqueline Rhodes. *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2014.

Alvarez, Steven. "Taco Literacies: Ethnography, Foodways, and Emotions through Mexican Food Writing." *Composition Forum* 34 (2016).

Anderson, M.T. *Feed*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2002.

---. *Feed.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2012.

Anderson, Paul Bunyan. "Directed Discussion Questions Plus Practical Objective Tests." *College English* 6.2 (1944): 104–11.

Anderson, Harold A., John J. De Boer, Max J. Herzberg, Marquis E. Shattuck, and Dora V. Smith. "Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools." *The English Journal* 31.1 (1942): 40–55.

Applegarth, Risa. "Children Speaking: Agency and Public Memory in the Children's Peace Statue Project." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 47.1 (2017): 49-73.

Ariès, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Trans. Robert Baldick. New York: Vintage Books, 1962.

Barnard, Ian. "Rhetorical Commonsense and Child Molester Panic—A Queer Intervention." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 47.1 (2017): 3–25.

Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011.

Berlin, James A. "Freirean Pedagogy in the U.S.: A Response." *JAC* 12.2 (1992): 414–21.

Bestor, Arthur E., Jr. "'Life Adjustment' Education: A Critique." *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors (1915-1955)* 3 (1952): 413–41.

Bishop, Wendy. "Because Teaching Composition is (Still) Mostly about Teaching Composition." *Composition Studies in the New Millennium: Rereading the Past, Rewriting the Future.* Eds. Lynn Z. Bloom, Donald A. Daiker, and Edward M. White. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2003. 65–77.

Bishops, Rudine Sims. "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom* 6.3 (1990).

Bizzell, Patricia. "Paulo Freire and What Education Can Do." *JAC* 17.3 (1997): 319–22.

Blackburn, Mollie V., and Jill M. Smith. "Moving Beyond the Inclusion of LGBT-Themed Literature in English Literature Arts Classrooms: Interrogating Heteronormativity and Exploring Intersectionality." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 53.8 (2010): 625–34.

Bollig, Chase. "'Is College Worth It?': Arguing for Composition's Value with the Citizen-Worker." *College Composition and Communication* 67.2 (2015): 150–72.

Bousquet, Marc. “Composition as Management Science: Toward a University without a WPA.” *JAC* 22.3 (2002): 493–527.

Bowling, Chris. “Teen’s Hot Dog Stand Serves Up Food, Inspiration with Minneapolis Inspectors’ Blessing.” *Star Tribune*, 18 July 2018.

Bradford, Clare. “‘Everything Must Go!’: Consumerism and Reader Positioning in M.T. Anderson’s *Feed*.” *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 2.2 (2010): 128–37.

Brenner, Devon. “They Read and Write, But Do They Critique?: The Four Resources of Literacy Practice in Printz-Award-Winning Literature.” *The ALAN Review* (Winter 2012): 39–48.

Broad, T.H. “What the Large High School is Doing About the Program of Life-Adjustment Education.” *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Convention of the National Association for Secondary School Principals*, Part Two. Hotel Commodore, New York: February 10–14, 1951.

Brown, Patrick. “The Dystopian Timeline to The Hunger Games [INFOGRAPHIC].” *GoodReads,* 21 March 2012.

Brown, Robin Terry. “4 Questions for Betsy Levy Paluck.” *Monitor on Psychology* 48.11 (2017): 23.

Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone Books, 2015.

Bystrom, Kerry, and Brenda Werth. “Stolen Children, Identity Rights, and Rhetoric (Argentina, 1983–2012).” *JAC* 33.3–4 (2013): 425–53.

Campbell, Jennifer. “Talking about Happiness: Interview Research and Well-Being.” *Composition Forum* 34 (2016).

Carlo, Roseanne. "Countering Institutional Success Stories: Outlaw Emotions in the Literacy Narrative." *Composition Forum* 34 (2016).

Carlsen, George Robert. "Education for Life Adjustment through English." *Education for Life Adjustment: Its Meaning and Implementation*. Ed. Harl R. Douglass. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1950. 88–109.

Cart, Michael. *From Romance to Realism: Fifty Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2011.

Castañeda, Claudia. *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds.* Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002.

Chaput, Catherine. "Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 43.1 (2010): 1–25.

Christenbury, Leila, and Patrick P. Kelly. "What Textbooks Can—and Cannot—Do." *The English Journal* 83.3 (1994): 76–80.

Clark, Noelene. "An Original Rebel Inspires 'Divergent' Heroine." *The Washington Post*, 22 March 2014.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic, 2008.

Crawford, Ilene. "Building a Theory of Affect in Cultural Studies Composition Pedagogy." *JAC* 22.3 (2002): 678–84.

"Critical Pedagogy Against Capitalist Schooling: Towards a Socialist Alternative—An Interview with Peter McLaren." *Global Education Magazine*, 17 April 2014.

Cruz, Jon D. "Cultural Studies and Social Movements: A Crucial Nexus in the American Case." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15.3 (2012): 254–301.

Darder, Antonia, Marta P. Baltodano, and Rodolfo D. Torres. "Critical Pedagogy: An Introduction." *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*. 3rd ed. Eds. Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Marta P. Baltadano. New York: Routledge, 2017. 1-23.

Dewey, John. *The School and Society*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1899.

Doctorow, Cory. *Homeland*. New York: Tor Books, 2014.

---. Little Brother. New York: Tor Books, 2010.

---. "Nature's Daredevils: Writing for Young Audiences." *Locus Magazine*, July 2008.

Drew, Julie. "(Teaching) Writing: Composition, Cultural Studies, Production." *JAC* 19.3 (1999): 411–29.

Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.

Durst, Russel K. "Can We Be Critical of Critical Pedagogy?" *College Composition and Communication* 58.1 (2006): 110–4.

---. Collision Course: Conflict, Negotiation, and Learning in College Composition. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1999.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future*: *Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004.

Ellis, Samantha. "Why *The Hunger Games*' Killer Katniss is a Great Female Role Model." *The Guardian*, 12 August 2014.

Ellsworth, Elizabeth. "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy." *Harvard Educational Review* 59.3 (1989): 297–324.

Enoch, Jessica. *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865-1911*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2008.

Eurich, Alvin C. "Our Responsibility for Youth." *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Convention of the National Association for Secondary School Principals*, Part Two. Hotel Commodore, New York: February 10–14, 1951.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 1970. New York: Continuum, 2000.

Fried, Milton. "Child Labor." *The New York Book of Knowledge.* Grolier Online, 2014.

Gabriel, Fleur. *Deconstructing Youth: Youth Discourses at the Limits of Sense*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Gallagher, Buell G. "Education, Youth, and American Culture." *Life Adjustment Education in the American Culture: Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education*. Washington D.C.: October 8–10, 1951.

Genette, Gérard. "Introduction to the Paratext." *New Literary History* 22.2 (1991): 261–72.

Giroux, Henry A. *America's Education Deficit and the War on Youth*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013.

Gottfried, Marianne Hirsh, and David H. Miles. "Defining Bildungsroman as a Genre." *Modern Language Association* 91.1 (1976): 122–3.

Grant, Gordon. "The Specificity of the Writing Classroom: A Response to Stuart Hall." *JAC* 18.3 (1998): 525–31.

Greene, Maxine. “Teaching as Possibility: A Light in Dark Times.” *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*. 3rd ed. Eds. Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Marta P. Baltodano. New York: Routledge, 2017. 494–502.

Guilherme, Alexandre. “What is Critical about Critical Pedagogy?” *Policy Futures in Education* 15.1 (2017): 3–5.

Harris, Joseph, Jay Rosen, and Gary Calpas. *Media Journal: Reading and Writing about Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999.

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

Hesford, Wendy. “Introduction: Facing Malala Yousafzai, Facing Ourselves.” *JAC* 33.3–4 (2013): 407–23.

Hinshaw, Wendy Wolters. “Regulating Girlhood: Protecting and Prosecuting Juvenile Violence.” *JAC* 33.3–4 (2013): 487–506.

Hintz, Carrie. “Monica Hughes, Lois Lowry, and Young Adult Dystopias.” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 26.2 (2002): 254–64.

Horner, Bruce. *Rewriting Composition: Terms of Exchange*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2016.

---. *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique.* Albany: SUNY Press, 2000.

“The Hunger Games Trilogy Discussion Guide.” *Scholastic.* Scholastic.com, n.d.

Jameson, Frederic. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso, 2005.

Jarratt, Susan C. “Editor’s Message.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 47.1 (2017): 1–2.

Jensen, Tim. *Our Common Sensorium: Rhetoric, Pathé, and Movements of the Social.* In process.

Kaplan, Jeffrey. "Why Literacy (and Young Adult Fiction) Matters: A Review of Current Research." *The ALAN Review* (Summer 2011): 69–72.

Katz, Michael. "A History of Compulsory Education Laws." *Phi Delta Kappa, Fastback Series* 75 (1976).

Knoblauch, C.H. "A Response to Gary Olson's Interview with Paulo (sic) Freire." *JAC*12.2 (1992): 407–13.

Kudlik, Maureen, Micah Ariel, Jessica Martinez, and Vince Sandri. *Constructing a Culture*. 11 March 2016. http://scalar.usc.edu/works/constructing-a-culture/.

Kwan, Gabriel. "A Teen, A Hot Dog Stand and a Big Dream." *MPR News*, 16 July 2018.

Lamos, Steve. "Toward Job Security for Teaching-Track Composition Faculty: Recognizing and Rewarding Affective-Labor-in-Space." *College English*, 78.4 (2016): 362–86.

Larson, Ann. "Rhetoric and Composition's Dead." *Education, Class, Politics*. 22 Feb. 2014. http://annlarson.org/2014/02/22/rhetoric-and-compositions-dead/.

Lee, Jasmine. "Exploring Uses of Young Adult (YA) Media in Postsecondary Writing Courses." Unpublished survey.

Lee, Jasmine, and Jonathan Alexander. "We Are All Abnegation Now: Suffering Agency in the *Divergent* Series." *Journal for the Fantastic in the Arts* 28.3 (2018): 388–401.

Lyon, Arabella. "Recognizing Children: If All Recognition is Misrecognition." *JAC* 33.3–4 (2013): 508–15.

Maasik, Sonia, and Jack Solomon. *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*. 8th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015.

Ma'ayan, Hadar Dubowsky. "Erika's Stories: Literacy Solutions for a Failing Middle School Student." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 53.8 (2010): 646–54.

Marinara, Martha, Jonathan Alexander, William P. Banks, and Samantha Blackmon. "Cruising Composition Texts: Negotiating Sexual Difference in First-Year Readers." *College Composition and Communication* 61.2 (2009): 269–96.

Martorana, Christine. "The Real/Ideal Research Project: Fostering Students' Emotional Literacy." *Composition Forum* 34 (2016).

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, *Volume 1*. 1867. Trans. Ben Fowkes, New York: Penguin Books, 1990.

Mason, Curtis. "Project English: Cold War Paradigms and the Teaching of Composition." *In the Archives of Composition: Writing and Rhetoric in High Schools and Normal Schools*. Eds. Lori Ostergaard and Henrietta Rix Wood. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2015. 206–22.

Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995): 83–109.

---. The Power at the End of the Economy. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2015.

McComiskey, Bruce. *Teaching Composition as a Social Process*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2000.

"Media, Activism, and Participatory Politics." *Youth Participatory Politics Research Network*. ypp.dmlcentral.net/projects/media-activism-and-participatory-politics. Accessed 19 July 2018.

Micciche, Laura. *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2007.

---. “Review: *(Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks: Conflicts of Culture, Ideology, and Pedagogy*.” *JAC* 20.1 (2000): 220–5.

Miles, Libby. “Constructing Composition: Reproduction and WPA Agency in Textbook Publishing.” *WPA* 24.1/2 (2000): 27–52.

Miller, Laura. “Fresh Hell: What’s Behind the Boom in Dystopian Fiction for Young Readers?” *The New Yorker*, 14 June 2010.

Miller, Susan. “The Sad Women in the Basement: Images of Composition Teaching.” *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1991. 121–41.

Minnix, Christopher. “‘Imagining Something Not Yet’—The Project of Public Writing: A Conversation with Paula Mathieu.” *Composition Forum* 36 (2017).

Molina, Tara. “12-Year-Old Lawn-Mowing Entrepreneur From Viral Story Has Big Plans for the Future.” *ABC News 5 Cleveland*, 19 July 2018.

Moore, Suzanne. “Why *The Hunger Games*’ Katniss Everdeen is a Role Model for Our Times.” *The Guardian*, 27 November 2013.

Morrison, Ewan. “YA Dystopias Teach Children to Submit to the Free Market, Not Fight Authority.” *The Guardian*, 1 September 2014.

Mortensen, Peter. “Of Handbooks and Handbags: Composition Textbook Publishing After the Deal Decade.” *(Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks: Conflicts of Culture, Ideology, and Pedagogy.* Eds. Gary S. Zaboly et al. New York: SUNY Press, 1999. 217–29.

Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000.

Newfield, Christopher. *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008.

"Odds in Our Favor." *The Harry Potter Alliance*. www.thehpalliance.org/success_stories_odds_in_our_favor.

Ohmann, Richard. *English in America: A Radical View of the Profession*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1996.

Petracca, Michael F., and Madeleine Sorapure. *Common Culture: Reading and Writing about American Popular Culture*. 7th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2012.

Powell, Katrina M. "Converging Crises: Rhetorical Constructions of Eugenics and the Public Child." *JAC* 33.3–4 (2013): 455–85.

"Reggie Boyz Lawn Service." *GoFundMe*.com, n.d.

Riedner, Rachel C. *Writing Neoliberal Values: Rhetorical Connectivities and Globalized Capitalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Roback, Diane. "Facts & Figures 2013: For Children's Books, *Divergent* Led the Pack." *Publisher's Weekly*, 14 Mar 2014.

Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary: The Struggle of America's Educationally Underprepared*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.

---. "Speculations on Process Knowledge and the Textbook's Static Page." *College Composition and Communication* 34.2 (1983): 208–13.

Roth, Veronica. *Divergent*. New York: Katherine Tegen Books, 2011.

Rowland, Allison L. "Zoetropes: Turning Fetuses into Humans at the National Memorial for the Unborn." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 47.1 (2017): 26–48.

Salvatori, Mariolina Rizzi, and Patricia Donahue. "The Figure of the Student in Composition Textbooks." *Teaching with Student Texts: Essays Toward an Informed Practice*. Eds. Joseph Harris et al. Louisville, CO: Utah State UP, 2010. 129–41.

Sanders, Joe Sutliff. "Inquiry at and in the Margins: How Peritexts Encourage Critical Reading." *A Literature of Questions: Nonfiction for the Critical Child*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2018.

Sano-Franchini, Jennifer. "'It's Like Writing Yourself into a Codependent Relationship with Someone Who Doesn't Even Want You!' Emotional Labor, Intimacy, and the Academic Job Market in Rhetoric and Composition." *College Composition and Communication* 68.1 (2016): 98–124.

Schaeffer, Jane C. "Improving Discussion Questions: Is Anyone Out There Listening?" *The English Journal* 78.4 (1989): 40–2.

Schell, Eileen E. *Gypsy Academics and Mother-teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1998.

Schilb, John. "Poststructuralism, Politics, and the Subject of Pedagogy." *Pedagogy is Politics*. Ed. Maria-Regina Kecht. Urbana, IL: U of Illinois P, 1992. 48–69.

Scott, Tony. *Dangerous Writing: Understanding the Political Economy of Composition*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2009.

Scott, Tony, and Nancy Welch. "Introduction: Composition in the Age of Austerity." *Composition in the Age of Austerity.* Eds. Nancy Welch and Tony Scott. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2016. 3–20.

Seigworth, Gregory J. “Capaciousness.” *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry* 1.1 (2017): i–v.

Seigworth, Gregory J., and Melissa Gregg. “An Inventory of Shimmers.” *The Affect Theory Reader*. Eds. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. 1–28.

Shapiro, Ari. “Hot Dog! 13-Year-Old Keeps His Stand Open with Help of Minneapolis Health Department.” *All Things Considered*, 24 July 2018.

Shor, Ira. *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.

Smelstor, Marjorie, and Carol Weiher. “Using Popular Culture to Teach Composition.” *The English Journal* 65.3 (1976): 41–6.

Smith, Gerald W. “What the Community College Is Doing About the Program of Life Adjustment.” *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Convention of the National Association for Secondary School Principals*, Part Two. Hotel Commodore, New York: February 10–14, 1951.

Spellmeyer, Kurt. “The Great Way: Reading and Writing in Freedom.” *(Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks: Conflicts of Culture, Ideology, and Pedagogy.* Eds. Gary S. Zaboly et al. New York: SUNY Press, 1999. 45–69.

Stenberg, Shari J. “Beyond Marketability: Locating Teacher Agency in the Neoliberal University.” *Composition in the Age of Austerity*. Eds. Nancy Welch and Tony Scott. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2016. 191–204.

---. *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age*. Boulder: UP of Colorado, 2015.

---. "Teaching and (Re)Learning the Rhetoric of Emotion." *Pedagogy* 11.2 (2011): 349–69.

Temple, Emily. "If Fiction Changes the World, It's Going to be YA: The Kids Aren't Just All Right—They're Better Than Us." *Literary Hub*, 23 March 2017.

Thayer, V.T. "Life-Adjustment vs. Basic Education." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 41.6 (1960): 250–3.

Thelin, William H. "Understanding Problems in Critical Classrooms." *College Composition and Communication* 57.4 (2005): 114–41.

---. "William H. Thelin's Response to Russel Durst." *College Composition and Communication* 58.1 (2006): 114–8.

Tonsor, Charles. "Some Higher Phases of Life Adjustment." *The Clearing House* 27.2 (1952): 92–4.

Treanor, Paul. "Neoliberalism: Origins, Theory, Definition." n.d. http://web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/neoliberalism.html.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Literary Conceptualizations of Growth: Metaphors and Cognition in Adolescent Literature*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014.

United States, Federal Security Agency, Office of Education. *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth* 22 (1951).

Ventura, Abbie. "Predicting a Better Situation? Three Young Adult Speculative Fiction Texts and the Possibilities for Social Change." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 36.1 (2011): 89–103.

Villadsen, Lisa Storm. “Propaedeutics to Action: Vernacular Rhetorical Citizenship—Reflections on and of the Work of Gerald A. Hauser.” *Gerald A. Hauser: Rhetorical Scholar of the Public Sphere*. Ed. Ronald C. Arnett. Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania Communication Association, 2016. 47–63.

Wan, Amy. *Producing Good Citizens: Literacy Training in Anxious Times.* Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2014.

Wang, Xiaolan. “Dystopian Nightmare in Contemporary Adolescent Fiction and Its Ethical Value.” *Forum for World Literature Studies* 8.1 (2016): 75–86.

Weedman, Rosalyn Z. “Mass Appeal: Pop Culture in the Composition Classroom.” *The English Journal* 77.7 (1988): 96–7.

Welch, Kathleen. “Ideology and Freshman Textbook Production: The Place of Theory in Writing Pedagogy.” *College Composition and Communication* 38.3 (1987): 269–82.

Welch, Nancy. *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2008.

Welch, Nancy, and Tony Scott, eds. *Composition in the Age of Austerity*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2016.

Wigdahl, Heidi. “Teen’s Hot Dog Stand Gets Support and a Permit.” *KARE 11*, 16 July 2018.

Wilkinson, Rachel. “Teaching Dystopian Literature to a Consumer Class.” *The English Journal* 99.3 (2010): 22–6.

Wilson, Greg, Carl G. Herndl, and Julie Simon. “Playing in Traffic: Cultural Studies and Composition Pedagogy.” *Composition Studies* 27.1 (1999): 93–107.

Winterowd, Ross. “Composition Textbooks: Publisher-Author Relationships.” *College Composition and Communication* 40.2 (1989): 139–51.

Wolk, Steven. “Reading for a Better World: Teaching for Social Responsibility with Young Adult Literature.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 52.8 (2009): 664–73.

Worsham, Lynn. “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion.” *JAC* 18.2 (1998): 213–45.

Wraga, William G. “From Slogan to Anathema: Historical Representations of Life Adjustment Education.” *American Journal of Education* 116.2 (2010): 185–209.

Yoon, K. Hyoejin. “Affecting the Transformative Intellectual: Questioning the ‘Noble’ Sentiments in Critical Pedagogy and Composition.” *JAC* 25.4 (2005): 717–59.

“Young Adult Books by the Numbers.” Blooming Twig. *Issues that Matter*, 14 June 2015.

Zebroski, James Thomas. “Critical Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and the Reconceptualization of Rhetoric and Composition.” *JAC* 31.1/2 (2011): 283–307.

---. “Textbook Advertisements in the Formation of Composition: 1969–1990.” *(Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks: Conflicts of Culture, Ideology, and Pedagogy.* Eds. Gary S. Zaboly et al. New York: SUNY Press, 1999. 231–49.