Transfigurative Access and Journal-Keeping Practice:
Theorizing Anti-Oppressive Rhetorical Scholarship

by

Esther Grace Witte

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(English Language and Literature)
in the University of Michigan
2022

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor M. Remi Yergeau, Chair
Professor Sara Blair
Assistant Professor Neil Simpkins, University of Washington
Professor Emeritus Sidonie Smith

Esther Grace Witte

egwitte@umich.edu

ORCID iD 0000-0003-1427-1939

© Esther Grace Witte, 2022

Dedication

For Patsy Yaeger: I hope it would have knocked your socks off.

Acknowledgements

While doing the work that that produced this text, I have lived as a white settler on the unceded lands of the **Meškwahki·aša·hina (Fox)**, **Peoria**, **Anishinabewaki**, and **Bodwéwadmi (Potawatomi)** peoples (lands currently colonized as southeast Michigan). This acknowledgement does little on its own to create accountability for the immeasurable and ongoing destruction and theft of Indigenous lifeways by colonization and settlement. I am still just beginning my work to understand my relationship to this violence.

⁎

This dissertation is formatted using **Atkinson Hyperlegible**, a font created in 2019 to increase accessibility and legibility particularly for low-vision readers. Named after J. Robert Atkinson, founder of the Braille Institute, this font is available as a free download at brailleinstitute.org/freefont. Thank you to my friend **Dimmer** for first telling me about it.

⁎

Far from enabling me to finish this project, I might not be alive now if it weren't for the timely medical care for my depression and anxiety, as well as the compassionate and realistic advice that I have received from **Dr. Stefani Hudson** of the UM University Health Service. She's been looking after me for almost six years now. With Dr. Hudson's help, I was able to obtain hormone replacement therapy from **Dr. John Randolph** and **Dr. Daphna Stroumsa** of Michigan Medicine without going through the gatekeeping that too many people still experience in

gaining access to necessary transition-related medical care. **Will Sherry** of the UM Spectrum Center also provided crucial advice about the HRT process. And thanks to the members of the **Graduate Employees Organization** over decades of contract campaigns, the cost of this care has been largely subsidized by the university.

This project is in part a culmination of many years of deep internal work guided by several excellent therapists. In New York City in 2011, **Marian Levinson** and **Linda Bradley** each helped me open the way to having a more honest, curious, and compassionate relationship with myself. In 2012, when I first arrived in Ann Arbor and sought therapy through UM Counseling and Psychological Services, I had a single intake session with **Fitz (S. M. Fitzgerald)**, then an intern completing their MSW degree. Fitz helped me find ongoing therapy with **Michele Rivette**, who over several years guided me through a painful investigation and healing of childhood trauma, my coming out as queer, and my decision to pursue gender transition. At just the right time, Michele acknowledged the limitations of her expertise and helped me find a new therapist (at the excellent and sadly soon-to-close **Integrative Empowerment Group**) with knowledge and experience of gender transition. When I went in for my first session with my new therapist in 2017, I thought I recognized their name, but couldn't place it. It turned out to be **Fitz**! Five years later, they remain a constant source of clarity, calm reassurance, humor, and anxiety-coping skills.

I'm grateful for ***sangha***, or the community of dharma practice, that I've become part of in the past several years. Thank you especially to the community of **RecoveryDharma.Online** and to my wise friends on the path: Stephanie, Alexander, John, Louis, and Jer.

*

Two of my earliest teachers deserve mention: **Chris Spoor**, my kindergarten teacher at Dansville Primary School in Dansville, NY, recognized and validated not only my early passion for writing but also my anxiety more than two decades before I did (according to the reports she sent home, which were saved by my parents). **Paula Jones** was my art teacher in first and second grade and then again at Dansville High School, where her classroom was a constant safe retreat for me and my journal during some very difficult years.

My undergraduate mentors at the University of Rochester, **Ken Gross**, **Jennifer Grotz**, **James Longenbach**, **Nigel Maister**, **John Michael**, **Russell Peck**, **Stephen Schottenfeld**, and **Joanna Scott** each advised, coached, recommended and otherwise supported me through the process of applying to PhD programs in 2011-12. I never forgot Stephen's caution that an academic career might not be for me (he wasn't wrong), or Ken's feedback on my first personal statement draft ("start over"), or Russell's observation that if I decided to leave the program partway through, I'd still be taking away several solid years of reading. I would not have applied to the University of Michigan without a last-minute suggestion from my UR classmate **Joseph Stadolnik**, who encouraged me to add UM to my list of programs. **Jared Klemp** at Washington University, and **Gillian White** and **Michael Awkward** at UM, each offered grounded advice during recruitment that crucially informed my decision to enroll here.

I'm grateful to **Becca Weiss** for enormous material and emotional support during my first few years in the program, especially during the summer of 2014, when she gave me refuge at her apartment in Brooklyn—time and space in which I was able to really start facing myself. I'm thankful too for her continued friendship.

My first few years in Michigan were also made habitable by friendships with **Gregory Arial, Kyle Eriks Cline**, **Maia Farrar**, **Rachel Greene**, **Cindy Keeler**, and **Brian Segal**. **Lauren Eriks Cline** was a steadfast source of company, support, humor, clarity, and warmth from our first meeting as prospective students. From 2014 to 2018, with **Nick Cobblah** and **Kyu Han Lee** I was able to find a sense of home and family in Michigan for the first time, in our "Triforce House," which became a safe place in which to fall apart. In 2015, I found a sense of queer belonging for the first time with **Gabby Sarpy**, **Mateo Alzate González**, **Michael Pascual**, **Faithe Day**, **Charnan Williams**, and others in gatherings at "The House." **Malcolm Tariq** organized House Balls where for the first time I played with clothes and nail polish and makeup as tools for experimenting with gender expression. He also said this thing once that has continually helped me find my way with writing: I said, "I'm trying to find my voice"; Malcolm responded: "practice your delivery; your voice will find you."

I've been grateful to have **Kari Schettine** as a reader ever since we were teens. When we reconnected in our late 20s, she read some of my new writing about journaling and journal pedagogy, and her feedback helped me recognize the potential in this work.

I'm deeply thankful to have crossed paths with **Cassie Vander Well** in 2016. She taught me so much about grace, faith, and art, and what she saw in my drawings helped me reclaim an artist identity. Together we found ways to combine my drawing practice with her dancing, and those experiments also transformed how I thought about creative mediums.

Angela M. Carter has had an enormous impact on my life and scholarship from our first meeting at the Society for Disability Studies conference in 2015. She was one of my first "queer mentors" as I was questioning everything, and I've learned so much from her about disability

and queer feminism. I continue to cite and recommend her 2015 *DSQ* article about trigger warnings and disability pedagogy as one of the most helpful takes on trauma-informed, accessible teaching.[1]

⁎

The stories of completing my PhD and of my gender transition are inseparable. My Rackham Humanities Research fellowship in 2016-17 was a crucial year in this respect because it was then I decided to quit grad school so that I could transition. **Samantha Riedel** gently punctured my denial when she was the first to describe me to me as "a gender nonconforming human." **Ai Binh Ho** encouraged me to take significant fellowship time away from scholarly work to sit with the question of what I actually wanted. **Cass Adair** and **Jina B. Kim** each gave me permission to "try on quitting." Also, thank you Cass for giving warm encouragement and steady support to my questioning process regarding both academics and gender; and thank you Jina for recognizing and naming my "deep weird," and for welcoming me to "the femme surpremacy" when I came out to you. **Vidhya Aravind**, **LaVelle Ridley**, and **Mari Brighe** also provided much-needed affirmation and guidance in my first moments of claiming transness. For additional trans friendship and community during this time, thank you **Renée Cymry**, **Carta Monir**, **Alice Stoehr**, **Vince Renée**, **Cass Wilkinson-Saldaña**, **Jen Carlson**, **Canyon Bosler**, **and Brendon Holloway.** Finally, I'm grateful to **Laverne Cox** for kind words during her visit to UM when she met with a closed-door gathering of trans and nonbinary students; many thanks to the **Spectrum Center** for making that event happen and inviting me to be there.

[1] "Teaching with Trauma: Trigger Warnings, Feminism, and Disability Pedagogy." https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/4652/3935

During that year I also joined the **Collective Against White Supremacy** in Ann Arbor, where I learned so much about community accountability, antiracist work, interdependence, group facilitation, consensus decision-making, working with conflict, political education, mutual aid, and much more. The group also welcomed my experiments with journal pedagogy in an activist context, which was an important seed of this project. Thank you to everyone who showed up to participate in CAWS during that time, and thank you especially to **Sarge Donovan-Smith**, **Luna Hughson**, **Anna Lemler**, **Austin McCoy**, **Katie Moore**, **Liz Ratzloff**, **Ari Renda**, **Tom Rice**, and **Maren Spolum**.

*

In the **UM English Department**, I learned the most from my **classmates**: Mateo Alzate González, Gregory Arial, Megan Behrend, Kathryne Bevilacqua, Annie Bolotin, Nick Cobblah, Sheila Coursey, Lauren Eriks Cline, Maia Farrar, Dory Fox, Derek Frasure, Kyle Frisina, Joey Gamble, Merideth Garcia, Kyle Grady, Kayla Grant, Amanda Greene, John Paul Hampstead, Amanda Healy, Martha Henzy, Ai Binh Ho, Dawn Kaczmar, Molly Keran, Jina B. Kim, Luke Kudryashov, Josh Kupetz, Crystal Yin Lie, Emily Lind Johnston, Sarah Mass, Anne Charlotte Mecklenberg, Valentina Montero-Roman, Bretney Moore, Cecelia Morales, Elise Nagy, Olivia Ordoñez, Michael Pascual, LaVelle Ridley, Gabby Sarpy, Laura Strout, Elizabeth Tacke, Malcolm Tariq, Megan Torti, Shannon Walton, Emily Waples, Kelly Wheeler, Adelay Witherite, and no doubt more I'm forgetting.

Members of the department administrative staff did all they could to make it easier to navigate complex bureaucracies and to help us get access to resources, funding and support that all grad students need. I know first-hand that I benefited from the tireless work of **Thea**

Bude, **Jan Burgess**, **Jennifer Catey**, **Lisa Curtis**, **Karena Huff**, **Jane Johnson**, **Denise Looker**, **Jeremy Mitchell**, **Simon Rivers**, and **Senia Vasquez**. I'm sure there are many more staff members than I know of who worked to my benefit, and I'm grateful for them.

In his service as Department Chair, **David Porter** demonstrated meaningful advocacy for vulnerable members of the department, and his important actions made our workplace tangibly safer for many of us.

Among the English faculty, I want to thank the teachers of the graduate seminars that were most important to the development of my writing and thinking: **Sara Blair**, **Daniel Hack**, **Petra Kuppers**, **Tobin Siebers**, **Sidonie Smith**, **Ruby Tapia**, **Valerie Traub**, **John Whittier-Ferguson**, **Patsy Yaeger**, and **Andrea Zemgulys**.

I had the excellent fortune to have **Patsy Yaeger** as a teacher for the first-term "Introduction to Graduate Studies" course. She lit a fire in my brain and in her class I fell in love with literary theory. Her joy in thinking about reading was infectious, and it has stayed with me. She also introduced me to tonglen meditation (access Chödrön), which greatly helped me manage anxiety that first year.

Tobin Siebers was my first teacher of disability studies. He continued writing and teaching through his final painful years of illness, so I was fortunate to enroll in the last graduate seminar he ever taught, on Disability Aesthetics. In Tobin's class and with his mentorship over the next year, I learned how to recognize and investigate how worlds are shaped by the way variable bodies are given value and meaning within powerful systems. I continually return to his book *Disability Theory* for critical grounding.

Special thanks to **John Whittier-Ferguson** and **Sara Blair**, my first real mentors in grad school, who both have remained loyal supporters throughout the last decade. My prelims exam with the two of them was one of the most exciting conversations I had in the program. They always encouraged my studies to wander beyond their fields of expertise and each made sure I was in good hands with every new teacher. When I decided to quit the PhD, John suggested that I use some of my remaining fellowship to do some reading or writing on topics close to my heart. Taking his suggestion, I started writing about my journals. When I decided to return, Sara remained a generous reader on my committee all the way through to the defense, and every conversation with her leveled-up my thinking.

I'm thankful that **Sidonie Smith** continued to advise me from retirement. Sid taught me so much about how to think with words. Her remarks to a gathering of PhD students in 2015, in which she urged us to create new dissertation forms, remained a guiding light.

Special thanks also to **Petra Kuppers**, who in modeling a disability culture pedagogy exploded my notion of how a classroom could work; and to **Meg Sweeney**, whose questions and suggestions in 2018 were helpful in the process of conceptualizing this project.

⁂

Thank you to the co-organizers, participants, and advisors of several **Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshops** that provided community, collaboration, draft feedback, books, and other resources that fed me and my work—including with actual food! Thank you to the **Visual Culture Workshop**, later renamed as **Critical Visualities**: especially Akiva Gottlieb, Katie Lennard, Michael Pascual, Kyle Frisina, and faculty advisor Sara Blair. Thank you to the **Disability Studies Group**, especially Amanda Greene, Ai Binh Ho, Jina B. Kim, Josh Kupetz, Luke

Kudryashov, Crystal Yin Lie, Elise Nagy, Olivia Ordoñez, Shannon Walton, and faculty advisors Robert Adams and Petra Kuppers. Thank you to **Journal Lab**: especially my co-founder Pau Nava; regular participants Anna, Comelia, D., David, Fareah, Jay, Luca, Phy, Raquel, Sarah, Tom, and Youna; and faculty advisors Meg Sweeney and Remi Yergeau. Thank you to the **Critical Intersectionality Workshop**: especially Chelle Jones, Andrea Mora, Angie Perone, Marisol Fila, and faculty advisor Beth Glover-Reed. And many thanks to the **Decolonizing Pedagogies Workshop**—Ludmila Ferrari, Andrew Hercher, Stephanie Hicks, Ana María León—for bringing **K. Wayne Yang** to campus and introducing me to his (and **la paperson**'s) work at a crucial time.

Numerous staff members at the **Center for Research on Learning and Teaching** have provided opportunities for practice, training and mentorship, and other resources that have been crucial to the growth of my pedagogical practice and research. As coordinators of the Graduate Student Instructional Consultant (GSIC) program, **Karishma Collette** and **Nicole Tuttle** were each steadfast advocates and highly effective mentors. I also learned a lot about instruction and consulting from my fellow GSICs, especially **Matthew Alemu**, **Finn Bell**, **Dom Bouavichith**, **Domenic Desocio**, **Lisa Jong**, **Naitnaphit Limlamai**, **Rebecca Marks**, **Becca Pickus**, **Jennifer Pollard**, and **Lisa Walsh**. Two CRLT internships (with additional funding from the English Department) also provided research opportunities that informed this project. **Sara Armstrong** invited me to assist in her research on first-generation college students' experiences and taught me how to conduct qualitative interviews. **Whitney Peoples**, a fount of knowledge about antiracist pedagogy who regularly acted as a sounding board, also invited me to collaborate with her on bibliographic research. **Ronit Ajlen**, **Victoria Genetin**, and **Kate Livingston** each taught me about instructional workshop design and facilitation. I also want to

thank **Theresa Braunschneider** for being the one who initially nudged me toward instructional consulting work.

I'm thankful to so many people who supported my work as a Graduate Student Instructor. **Julian Levinson** taught the first pedagogy seminar I took in fall 2013. My first classrooms, in 2013-14, were discussion sections for English courses led by **Jonathan Freedman** and **Eileen Pollack**, and also assisted by fellow GSIs **Ai Binh Ho** and **Steve Pelletier**. In 2014-15, I was trained and guided by **Megan Sweeney**, **Jeremiah Chamberlin**, **Danielle Lillge** and **Justine Neiderheiser** in teaching first-year writing. While a Graduate Student Mentor for the English Department Writing Program in 2015-16, I had the great pleasure of being part of an amazing teaching/mentoring team with **Chris Parsons**, **Jeremiah Chamberlin**, and **Andrea Zemgulys**; i'm sure it was in that generative context that I became a pedagogical theorist. I'm indebted to **Olivia Ordoñez** for one of the best teaching opportunities I've had—being Remi Yergeau's teaching assistant for a second consecutive semester—because in winter 2018 Olivia offered to swap assignments unasked, for reasons she recalls. My first use of a "contract grading" approach in FYW, in Fall 2018, greatly benefited from initial guidance from **Ali Shapiro**, and from later discussions with Ali, **April Conway**, and **Lauren Eriks Cline**. In Winter 2019, **Gina Brandolino** invited me to experiment with the GSI Writing Fellow role in our "U.S. Working Class Literature" course in ways that greatly benefited the whole class, and also expanded my sense of what it means to teach anti-oppressive critical writing. Gina also took over my responsibility of grading papers that term, allowing me more dissertation writing time. My last and favorite GSI position, teaching discussion sections for Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies in Fall 2019, was supervised by **Maria Cotera**. I gained more useful knowledge from my

GSI teammates—**Tamar Alexanian**, **Amelia Burke**, **Eimeel Castillo**, **Emily Coccia**, **Angie Miller**, **Pau Nava**, **Mary Shelly**, and **Sydney Tunstall**—than I did from half of my graduate seminars. As our GSM, **Val Kutchko** was calm in a storm, thoughtfully organized, endlessly helpful, and a great pleasure to work with.

*

After several discarded chapter drafts, dead ends, shutdowns and restarts, with the help of numerous people I was able to build a writing practice that would ultimately enable me to complete the dissertation. The essays here were partly conceived during conversations in winter 2019 with several writing consultants at the UM Sweetland Center for Writing: **Angela Berkeley**, **April Conway**, **Shelley Manis**, and **Stephanie Moody**. At the 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) convention in Pittsburgh, I received valuable advice and questions about my work from **Ellen Cushman**, **Ames Hawkins**, and **Stephanie Kerschbaum**. In dissertation writing groups, **Marisol Fila**, **Channing Matthews**, and **Elizabeth Tacke** each provided models and feedback that helped me learn how to express my arguments. In 2021 I had conversations with **Brenna Swift** about journal-keeping research that helped my ideas take stronger shape; and **Stephanie Rosen**'s feedback on my "figurative access" material greatly clarified my thinking about the concept.

During the pandemic, **Neil Simpkins** and I went from being occasional conference acquaintances to regular writing partners over zoom. His thoughtfulness and vast knowledge of both disability studies and CompRhet were enormously helpful to me as the project developed. When I needed a new committee member, Neil volunteered to step in, saving me the trouble of onboarding someone unfamiliar. He also put into practice in his own classroom some of the

journal-keeping pedagogies I was writing about, which gave me additional insight and raised useful questions about my theory.

I would not have been able to write a dissertation all the way to defending it without the help of **Max Baumkel**, my "dissertation doula." In June 2020, Max had an idea about a counseling/coaching service he wanted to offer to PhD students who needed help either to finish dissertations, or to leave their programs. He knew from a mutual friend that I was struggling with the dissertation process, so he reached out to me for a brainstorming session that ended with an invitation to be his first "guinea pig" client. Over the next two years, Max helped me totally reinvent my approach to writing using mindfulness, journal-keeping, and reflexive dialogue. Our work together made the dissertation process accessible to me like nothing else had.

I did most of the writing and revising of these essays during the COVID-19 pandemic. A few months into the first lockdown, **Cass Adair** invited me to join a zoom-based co-working group organized by **Nikki Stevens** and frequented by **Liz Dietz**, **Allie Hirsch**, **Kirsten Lee**, **Allie Martin**, **Molly Morin**, **Jackie Pogue**, **Madison Weist**, and **Els Woudstra**. This group has been the greatest unexpected gift of pandemic circumstances, an endless fount of good humor, care packages, thoughtful advice, writing feedback, baking tips, and silly drawings. We came to call it "Good Zoom" as opposed to all the mediocre, tedious, inaccessible or downright bad online spaces we endure in these times. Two years later the group continues to delight in friendship and all manner of mutual support.

*

Thank you to **Pau Nava**: this project and my practice wouldn't be what they are without your friendship. In first meeting you I was thrilled to find someone who seemed as obsessed with journal-keeping as I am. You jumped at the idea of collaborating with me to create events about journal-keeping; our workshop Journal Lab has been one of the best projects I've ever been part of. I'm thankful to you too for naming the concept of "journalcore," which I understand to be a practice, an aesthetic, and a community of connection around queer personal archives. To me, journalcore means being hardcore about journal-keeping and it's about keeping journaling at the core of what you do and how you live. Thank you, Pau, also for zines, tarot readings, spells, road trips, and so much laughter.

Thank you to **Remi Yergeau**: It seems doubtful I would have finished the PhD without your advising; your support as I "tried on quitting"; your constant readership of my writing no matter how incoherent (so many pages of associative run-ons and endless lists); your eagerness for all the possible forms my project could take (even as in the end it looks fairly conventional, at least on the surface); your help and advocacy as I navigated bureaucratic barriers. Thank you for teaching me what it means to work with rhetoric as a manifestation of power; for being an exemplary model of accessible teaching practice; for advising on my experiments with journal-keeping pedagogy in two undergraduate classrooms; and for sending me donuts during the final weeks before my defense.

Thank you to **Ruth Dutting Witte** not only for being my mom but also for setting an example of what teaching can look like when it's connected to the earth and free of institutional restrictions. In creating **Growing Places**, you taught me about interdependence, community care, play and art as teaching and learning, and so much more. And thank you to

both my parents, **Ruth and Tony Witte**, for listening when I shared painful truths about my childhood, and for steady support throughout my transition and the many years I've been in this program.

I'm endlessly grateful to my partner **Allie Tova Hirsch**: for everything from asking me out to a movie to making home with me in Ypsilanti. For your bullshit detector and your insistence on questioning everything. For collecting memes specifically to crack me up. For showing me how to be a more compassionate teacher, sibling, and friend. For letting me read your novel in progress. For your genius in the kitchen. For so many more things than I can put into words.

Last but not least (though she is smol), I must mention the important contributions of **Banana**, our cat. Thank you for the healing magic of your purrs, for warming our laps in the Michigan winter, and for guarding us always from predators and ghosts.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....ii

Acknowledgements.....iii

List of Figures.....xx

Abstract.....xxi

Chapter I. Introduction: Anti-Oppressive Rhetorical Scholarship, or Learning Teaching Living Meaning 1

Core concepts: Tropes, Practice, Figurative Access, Journal-Keeping 3

On nonlinearity and access to this work 6

What is anti-oppressive teaching and learning? 9

Scholarship as practice 24

Working with anti-oppressive values for teaching 38

Chapter II. Methodology of Tropes: Methods of Troping to Shape Change 43

Prologue: "Racism is a Pandemic" 44

Methodology of Tropes and Methods of Troping 47

Terminology: Tropes, Troping, Tropology 51

Studying Tropes to Expose Power: Beyond Critical Discourse Analysis 56

A Troping Methods Toolkit 61

Chapter III. Methodology of Practice 75

A story about getting back in the pool 76

Senses of Practice 1: Binary, Nonbinary 78

Reorienting to Practice 80

Transformative Rhetorical Theory 84

Senses of Practice 2: Inherited, Intentional, Critical, Imaginative 91

Practice and speculation: "science-fictional behavior" 94

Ways of Practicing: some working guides for reflection 97

Chapter IV. The Question of Figurative Access 100

Metaphors are access devices for teaching writing 101

Access as meaning-making: critical access theory x. rhetorical theory 107

Figurative access, 1: a type of access, expanding Adam Banks's taxonomy 113

Figurative access, 2: ways to shape the movement of meanings 115

Transformative access to meaning-making? 123

Chapter V. A Constellation of Practice-Tropes for Journal-Keeping Pedagogy 126

Defining "journal-keeping" for pedagogical purposes 127

Themes in extant journal-keeping pedagogies and literatures 132

The Practice of Constellation / a Constellation of Practices 135

Keeping 142

Sharing 145

Devices 148

Return 153

Containment 158

Experiment 161

Expression 164

Exercise 168

Chapter VI. Conclusion: Transfigurative Access and Journal-Keeping Practice: Ways Forward in the Writing Classroom 173

Journal Lab: A Queer Community Pedagogy 174

Assessment and journal-keeping in college first year writing 190

Exit Note / Dedication of Merit 203

Bibliography 208

List of Figures

Figure 1. Workshop handout describing a selection of journal devices 151

Figure 2. Four Guiding Themes of Journal Lab RIW 175

Figure 3. Image of a whiteboard with handwritten notes about guidelines and assumptions for Journal Lab interactions 178

Figure 4. Working Assumptions for Journalcore Community Spaces 178

Figure 5. Example of a Journal Lab individual experiment 182

Figure 6. Example of a Journal Lab community experiment 183

Abstract

This dissertation theorizes practices of personal writing and reflection—specifically, journal-keeping—within the context of college writing classrooms. Journal-keeping enables practitioners to understand and shift relations of power and oppression that are forged through everyday habits of meaning-making. Journal-keeping theory addresses the need for college writing instruction to better support the difficult and vulnerable self-investigative work of anti-racism, feminism, disability justice, climate justice, and/or decolonization. Emerging from reflection on the author's own teaching and journal-keeping practices, the project offers a theoretical approach to these questions: what if college writing pedagogies held personal writing practice as a core component of anti-oppressive teaching and learning? How would it work in college classrooms? What kinds of transformations could it make more possible?

Closely reading work by Sara Ahmed, adrienne maree brown, Jay Dolmage, Tanya Titchkosky, and others, the four main essays here present a theoretical approach to *journal-keeping* by leveraging *tropes*, *practice*, and *figurative access*. As methodological concepts, *tropes* and *practice* each refer to different yet interdependent ways of thinking about what we're doing in rhetorical scholarship. "Methodology of Tropes," a study of scholarly work on tropes and rhetorical figures as key resources of meaning-making, identifies some critical methods of *troping*, or intentional ways of exploiting the functions of tropes to engage in critical analysis and action upon social and cultural discourses. "Methodology of Practice" draws

from Buddhist and Black Feminist teachings to understand *practice* as a framework for critical reflection on meaning-making that accounts for both personal intentions and larger systems of value.

Figurative access and *journal-keeping* can each be thought of as different practical combinations of the methodologies of tropes and practice. "The Question of Figurative Access" asks how metaphors and other rhetorical figures can affect access and accessibility. Figurative access deepens both discursive and material dimensions of access and accessibility by building on the work of disability theorists and rhetorical theorists. Figurative access also helps make sense of how the methodologies of tropes and practice come together in the concept of *practice-tropes*: figures that organize patterned ways of doing things. "A Constellation of Practice-Tropes for Journal-Keeping Pedagogy" recognizes the difficulty of incorporating vulnerable personal material in classroom contexts and explores this difficulty using figurative access and practice-tropes. Reviewing literatures of therapeutic journaling and artist sketchbooks, and reflecting on the author's own personal and pedagogical practices, the essay looks closely at eight interrelated practice-tropes for using journals: Keeping, Sharing, Devices, Experiment, Expression, Exercise, Containment, and Return—to explore how practitioners can use such concepts to reflect on and organize journal-keeping practices in their own particular learning contexts.

Chapter I. Introduction:
Anti-Oppressive Rhetorical Scholarship, or Learning Teaching Living Meaning[2]

This work of scholarship is offered to anyone interested in the theory and/or practice of teaching writing, communication, rhetorics, or meaning-making, at the college level. More specifically, I address those who approach such teaching and learning as a means of resisting and transforming systems of oppression. My studies develop a set of conceptual tools that may be used to organize practices of personal writing and reflection—specifically, journal-keeping—within the context of college writing classrooms. I investigate the use of journal-keeping for understanding and shifting relations of power and oppression that are forged through our everyday habits of meaning-making. Personal reflective practices like journal-keeping can enable teachers and learners to gain insight into how systems of power, oppression and hierarchy on the largest collective scales are rooted in our daily lives and in our most private feelings and thoughts. Anti-oppressive teaching and learning demands that we look deeply inward with compassionate curiosity about our lived experiences, and it demands rigorous accountability to the core values of our various movements for justice.

While often professing commitments to anti-racism, feminism, disability justice, climate justice, and/or decolonization, college writing instruction in its usual forms does not adequately

[2] A note on citational references: throughout this text, I am following Jay Dolmage's practice of using the verb "access" instead of "see" when indicating references (access Dolmage, *Academic Ableism* for examples). This is a practice of inclusive language that challenges the ableist use of sightedness as a metaphor for obtaining knowledge.

support this difficult and vulnerable inner work. Many scholars and teachers of Composition and Rhetoric (CompRhet) or Writing Studies will readily admit that systems of domination like racial capitalism, hetero/cissexism, and ableism are deeply embedded in and maintained through the habitual ways we make sense of our personal experiences, our perceptions and cognition, or our emotional processes. One can consult decades of scholarship on implicit bias, stereotype threat, trauma-based understandings of racism, psychologies of internalized oppression, epistemologies of ignorance. Yet our curricula and educational systems at best don't encourage, and at worst are openly hostile to ongoing introspective practices that seek to expose and remake oppressive meaning-making processes. This project emerged out of my experiences of teaching and learning under such contradictory conditions.

The project also emerged out of my lifelong obsession with journal-keeping, and my growing appreciation in recent years for the transformative power of journal-keeping in my own life, as my journals became a primary resource that enabled me to access a nonbinary gender transition. It was my own daily, ongoing, open-ended introspective practice of writing about and critiquing the ways I made sense of my experiences, past and present, that enabled me to remake my life in nonbinary terms. My journal-keeping practice served as a reliable vehicle for this introspective meaning-making work. I am not saying that one could not realize a trans identity without using a journal to get there. Rather, my experience of transition—which took place during my graduate training and teaching as a scholar in CompRhet and Disability Studies—led me to wonder: what if our college writing curricula could embrace this kind of personal writing practice as a core component of teaching and learning that professes to undo

systemic oppressions? How would it work? What kinds of transformations could it make more possible?

The project is thus an offering to individuals who embrace anti-oppressive values in teaching and learning, and to those who share my curiosity about how introspective writing practices might work in the context of institutional education. My focus is college writing instruction because that is the primary domain I've been working in, but I am also eager to find out how these ideas might be taken up in other disciplines of academia or in other educational contexts, and I heartily welcome readers who work in those domains.

Core concepts: Tropes, Practice, Figurative Access, Journal-Keeping

In this project, I investigate some ideas about anti-oppressive teaching and learning by proceeding in a wandering, wondering, and meditative mode, using a range of practices from close reading to imaginative reflection. I'm indebted to many exemplary teachers of these practices. Perhaps especially Sara Ahmed, who follows words and figures around in order to expose certain aspects of how oppression is constituted in the embodied or phenomenological experience of discourse.[3] Perhaps especially adrienne maree brown, who describes her landmark text *Emergent Strategy* as a collection of writings "sharing my learning processes in the face of…wonder" at complex patterns in the natural world (2); and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, who uses meditative writing to "open up space for wondering together and asking questions" in order to deepen engagements in movements "for Black liberation, queer liberation, disability

[3] For instance, following around the figure of the "willful subject" leads Ahmed to insights about how structural power hides itself: "When a structural problem becomes diagnosed in terms of the will, then individuals become the problem: individuals become the cause of problems deemed their own" (*Willful Subjects* 7).

justice, economic justice, racial justice, and gender justice" (*Undrowned* 9, 10). Perhaps especially Tanya Titchkosky, who articulates a "politics of wonder" and a method of "restless reflexive return" to unsettle the certainties that undergird dominant meanings of disability and access (*The Question of Access* 15). Following such teachers, this project is a result of my wondering about, following-around, and restlessly, reflexively returning to four interlocking core concepts—*tropes*, *practice*, *figurative access*, and *journal-keeping*—each of which is the subject of one of the four main essays that make up this dissertation.

I approach "Tropes" and "Practice" as methodological concepts in their respective essays. In other words, each of these two concepts have been key to my emerging understanding of "what I think I am doing and how I am doing it," to paraphrase Ann Berthoff (19),[4] in developing my theories of anti-oppressive rhetorical scholarship. In "Methodology of Tropes," I read and study scholarly work on tropes and rhetorical figures as key resources of meaning-making, and I identify some critical methods of *troping*, or intentional ways of exploiting the functions of tropes to facilitate analysis, inquiry, or action upon social and cultural discourses. In "Methodology of Practice," I meditate on a concept of "practice" as a framework for personal, critical reflection in relation both to personal intentions and to larger systems of value. Both methodologies have to do with ways of conceptualizing rhetorical processes—or meaning-making at work in the social and cultural spheres we inhabit. We need clear, accessible, yet multidimensional ways of conceptualizing meaning-making processes because these processes have everything to do with how power circulates through embodied, lived relations. Such clarity is what I'm trying to cultivate in these essays.

[4] I discuss Berthoff's approach to method in "Methodology of Practice."

Figurative access and *journal-keeping* can be thought of as specific ways of using the methodologies of tropes and practice together. Figurative access has to do with how metaphors and other rhetorical figures are significant resources for creating access and practicing accessibility. This is a term I'm introducing to represent discursive dimensions of access and accessibility by building on the work of disability theorists and rhetorical theorists. Figurative access also helps make sense of how the methodologies of tropes and practice come together in the concept of what I call "practice-tropes": figures and metaphors we use specifically to organize our ways of doing things, or our practices. Finally, the essay on Journal-Keeping recognizes the potential difficulty of incorporating vulnerable personal material in classroom contexts and explores this difficulty using the insights of practice, troping, and figurative access. In studying literatures of journal-keeping pedagogy in therapeutic and artistic domains, and in reflecting on my own personal and pedagogical practices with journals in dialogue with these literatures, I find it useful to think about journal-keeping techniques in terms of figurative access devices, or practice-tropes. The essay looks closely at eight interrelated practice-tropes of journal keeping pedagogy—Keeping, Sharing, Devices, Experiment, Expression, Exercise, Containment, and Return—to explore how practitioners can use such concepts to reflect on and organize journal-keeping practices in their own learning contexts.

In this introductory essay, I want to orient readers to the project as a whole by narrating some of the background and emergence of the project: particularly, what I mean when I talk about "anti-oppressive rhetorical scholarship" or "anti-oppressive teaching and learning about meaning-making"; how my understanding of this work emerged out of my scholarly,

professional, and personal experiences of the past decade; and further how my experiments with journal-keeping in the classroom led me to create this project. In the Conclusion to the dissertation, I offer further reflections on my practical experiences with journal-keeping pedagogy in Journal Lab, a workshop collaboration with Pau Nava; and some thoughts about new approaches to teaching first-year writing informed by the theories developed here.

On nonlinearity and access to this work

In this document, I am presenting these six essays—each of which in their current form offers a linear reading experience, with the somewhat-exception of the Journal-Keeping essay—in an order likely to support reading of the entire dissertation. At the same time, I want to support nonlinear and partial engagements with this work, and to make the work accessible to readers of various backgrounds, interests, and access needs. I expect readers may want to engage with different parts, to varying degrees of depth, depending on what vocabulary they have or what questions guide their engagement. My intended audience includes anyone who wants to use practices of self-reflection and discursive critique to better understand and shift the relations of meaning-making that uphold unjust systems, and particularly those readers who approach this work in contexts of teaching and learning. Such readers might include a CompRhet scholar, a secondary school teacher, an instructional consultant, a conflict mediator, a social justice movement facilitator—to name only a few. You may want to read just one of the essays, or two, or four. One reader might want to go straight to the journal-keeping essay; another might be more interested in theories of tropes. A college writing instructor may simply want to consult my conclusion for syllabus guidance. My hope is to support all partial engagements by offering multiple entry points and pathways to traverse the work. Ideally, you

can begin with any of the essays and still have a sense of being oriented and able to navigate to other parts of the project that might be useful to you. I have marked cross references between the different essays using their titles rather than chapter numbers.

The nonlinearity of my reading and theorizing methods was reflected in the nonlinearity of my writing process. I wish that the document reflected that more so than the linear final text that I have produced. It feels important that I make visible the question of my own access to the task of creating a dissertation. I made multiple attempts to conceptualize the project as a series of dissertation chapters that would present my arguments in a uniform sequence. I kept getting stuck because I could not reconcile the nonlinearity of my thinking and writing processes to the linear structures I was trying to build. Eventually I recognized that the normative framework of linear chapters was itself a barrier to my progress, and I started asking what different form would be more accessible to me for composing the project. I then imagined a composition that reflected how my ideas took shape as I wrote, as a complex web of interdependent exchanges.

I used a metaphor to increase my access to this task: I started thinking of the dissertation as a garden plot. Just as I would plan out the sections of a garden, I mapped out the essays here by gathering clusters of my most compelling ideas into a set of main topics. As each garden section would be designated for planting particular seeds, I seeded these essay topics with materials from my previous efforts. I gathered relevant pieces of text from my accumulated notes and unfinished drafts, and placed them in topic-designated folders, where they could germinate together. As in a garden I don't need to follow any linear path from section to section as I plant, fertilize, weed, and harvest, but rather I go where the energy is—

where weeds are showing up, where overgrowth needs pruning, where produce is ready for harvest; likewise, I allowed myself to follow the energy of my thinking from one section to another. Often as I worked with a source or an example in one essay, I found something that would help me move a different essay forward. If I felt stuck in one place, I would turn to an area I hadn't tended in a while (perhaps a section I had likewise put aside in an earlier moment of stuckness) and I might find the writing there suddenly easy and satisfying. As the material grew, I abandoned some sections and combined others: at first I had thirteen topic-folders; these became eight planned essays, then finally four complete drafts. In the long run, all these essays have emerged concurrently, like crops steadily growing and blooming and fruiting.[5] Throughout the process I have been turning from one draft to another before reaching a state of completion with any one of them—leaving whole sections undrafted, bulleted lists of ideas and notes-to-self in between polished paragraphs, material I wrote months or years ago not yet revised to fit its new contexts. I'm thankful to have had numerous readers who have engaged generously and thoughtfully with my work in these messy stages.

Organizing my process in this way was crucial for making this writing task accessible to me. During grad school I have navigated trauma recovery, depression and anxiety, and nonbinary gender transition, all impacting my learning process as I tried and failed to work not only with the linear dissertation framework but at the grueling pace that is normalized within our institutional academic culture (more on this later). My nonlinear process and the questions of access that pertain to it are all related to my effort to embody, in textual practice, some of

[5] My thinking with garden metaphors is informed by the work of Ruth Dutting Witte, my mother, a community organizer, preschool teacher and founder of Growing Places Creative Enrichment Center in Dansville NY. For over two decades she used gardening as a core practice for teaching and building community. In her writing, she describes her preschool program as a "child garden." Access Witte, *Changing the World Through Children*.

the values I'm advocating for in scholarship, namely an anti-oppressive, transformative politics of learning and teaching, as I will discuss in the next section.

What is anti-oppressive teaching and learning?

"Anti-oppressive learning and teaching" refers to those educational practices that are oriented toward the values put forward by anti-oppressive movements, including but not limited to movements against racism, white supremacy, racial capitalism, imperialism and colonization, hetero-cissexism and patriarchy, and all forms of systemic domination, exploitation, and abuse of human and other beings for the benefit of select groups. Anti-oppressive teaching and learning has to do with transforming knowledge production to end oppressive violence that is currently happening even now everywhere, including in our classrooms. This transformation requires that we recognize and investigate how our own everyday practices are caught up in oppressive dynamics; how we are part of these histories, and how our present is someone's future. And it requires that we conduct these investigations with care and compassion for the real vulnerabilities of all beings with whom we share space on this planet. In these investigations we cultivate meaning-making practices that seek to end violence, to cultivate healing, and to move toward more just futures.

I prefer the phrase "anti-oppressive teaching and learning" to signal the political commitments of my work—rather than common alternatives like *social-justice pedagogy*, or *critical* or *liberatory pedagogy*—for specific reasons. "Teaching and learning" or "learning and teaching" are stylistically cumbersome yet accessible alternatives to the more academic term "pedagogy." They are also more transparently descriptive of the activities they refer to. "Pedagogy" refers to an academic model of discourse on the theories and practices of

education, or reflection and theory regarding how people teach and learn. Yet it can seem that "pedagogy" is a discourse just for "teachers" (or "pedagogues"), or even just for professional education researchers. By using the conjunctive "teaching and learning" instead to refer to such reflection, I mean to emphasize that both actions, to teach and to learn, are at play; neither can operate without the other, and neither is restricted to particular persons. Everyone involved in education partakes of both teaching and learning; it is not strictly that teachers just teach, and learners (or "students") just learn. Everyone in each classroom holds valuable knowledge to share and valid questions to ask, as informed by their own lived contexts and perspectives. Students in a class teach each other; teachers learn from students. Thus, the conjunction "learning and teaching" refers to a reflexive discourse about what takes place in a classroom, a discourse that is shared by all participants, whatever their status (instructor, student, consultant, etc.) in institutional terms.[6] At times I use terms like "practitioner" or "participant" rather than teacher/instructor or student/learner, to make some space to move among the restrictions and hierarchies implied by institutional status. When narrating my own teaching and learning experiences, I use "teachers" and "students" to acknowledge the force of these institutional roles even as I try to resist their limits.

This is not to suggest that a simple change of words is equivalent to a leveling of hierarchies. If, as Jacqueline Rhodes suggests, "pedagogy is about disciplining the subject…. a heterosexed political indoctrination in service of a heterosexed institutional imperative" (quoted in Waite 7), then "teaching and learning" is no less complicit in such disciplining. My

[6] My concept of "teaching and learning" is also informed by my work as an instructional consultant at the UM Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, where I facilitated feedback discussions between students and instructors with the goal of improved learning experiences.

point is not that choosing different words for the thing makes the disciplining stop. In using terms like "participant" to represent the user of the conceptual tools that I develop, the "practitioner" of the practices I theorize, I mean to be clear that these tools and practices can be taken up by everyone engaged in a classroom situation. This language simply suggests that everyone could understand and shift the dynamics at play in this work.

This opportunity presents itself in the practice of critique. As such I imagine "anti-oppressive teaching and learning" as both an expansion and a focusing of "critical pedagogy." Critique remains central, not in a doubting or negating sense ("criticizing") but specifically in a sense of rigorously and continuously asking questions about the learning-and-teaching work that we're involved in. This kind of critique is creative, open-ended, and "illuminating," as Henry Giroux puts it. For him, pedagogy is "inherently productive and directive practice rather than neutral or objective"; thus, "[a]s a responsible and self-reflective practice, critical pedagogy illuminates how classroom learning embodies selective values, is entangled with relations of power, entails judgments about what knowledge counts, legitimates specific social relations, defines agency in particular ways, and always presupposes a particular notion of the future" (*On Critical Pedagogy* [2ed] 4-5). Such "illumination" of the otherwise hidden politics of our pedagogies is made possible by reflexive critique, by continually asking questions, as we teach and as we learn, about what is taking place in those pedagogies. Anti-oppressive teaching and learning pursues such questions as a central, foundational practice. In all our teaching and learning work we should ask: what selective values are we embodying in this process? What relations of power are present in our interactions? How are we deciding what knowledge

counts, or what relations are legitimate? What does agency mean here? What kinds of futures are we imagining?

Such a critical pedagogy takes on an *anti-oppressive* focus or orientation when it strives specifically to embody anti-oppressive values. It is not enough, in an anti-oppressive approach, to illuminate what values we are serving: we must discern the difference between those values that are aligned with oppressive social relations, thus serving the needs and desires of some at the expense of others; and those values that serve the needs of all living beings. There is no neutral position in this work, as many anti-oppressive scholars have insisted: Ibram X. Kendi, for example, frequently asserts that one can't be "non-racist," because everyone is socialized within a racist culture and therefore we must adopt an "anti-racist" approach to unlearning racist ideas. In her framework of antiracist pedagogy, Kyoko Kishimoto emphasizes that (especially white) teachers must strive not to embody a "neutral" position regarding racism (543). For AnaLouise Keating, transforming oppressive systems of power requires that we actively "challenge racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression" (9).

This is difficult, complex work because anti-oppressive approaches must consider both the specific forms and contexts of oppression, while recognizing that many different forms of oppression are always interwoven with each other, as we learn from Black, Chicana, and third-world feminisms[7] and disability justice[8] in particular. Being an umbrella term, "anti-oppressive teaching and learning" thus gathers a multitude of more specific terms, that declare positions in resistance to specific systems of oppression, because we still need the specificity of terms and

[7] Access Lorde; Collins; Anzaldua; Anzaldua & Moraga; Sandoval; hooks; Crenshaw.

[8] Access Sins Invalid; Mingus; Piepzna-Samarasinha; Clare.

perspectives like anti-racist, crip/disability justice, feminist, queer, trans, and decolonial pedagogies. It must be both capacious in attending to the broad patterns of interconnected struggles, and specific enough to challenge the particulars of oppression and erasure.

I want to situate my understanding of anti-oppressive learning and teaching work as emergent from my experiences of study and practice engaging with many different struggles including disability justice, queer/trans liberation, and anti-racism, while I've worked as a doctoral student in English; an instructor of undergraduate literature, writing, disability studies, and gender studies courses; a community activist; and an instructional consultant. Centering my own experience in this way is not meant to be deterministic but rather to illustrate the reflective basis of my conceptual work.

Academic Disability Studies

In terms of academic scholarship—by which I mean scholarship that is identified with and located in the institutional infrastructure of universities—Disability Studies was where I first became actively politicized in my work. I was introduced to Disability Studies by Tobin Siebers, in his seminar on Disability Aesthetics in Fall 2013. This experience transformed my awareness of oppression and exclusion in the social environment by exposing what Siebers calls the ideology of ability.[9] The seminar also drew my attention to the pervasive yet thoroughly devalued presence of disability everywhere around me, from my personal history to the

[9] "The ideology of ability is at its simplest the preference for able-bodiedness. At its most radical, it defines the baseline by which humanness is determined, setting the measure of body and mind that gives or denies human status to individual persons. It affects nearly all of our judgments, definitions, and values about human beings, but because it is discriminatory and exclusionary, it creates social locations outside of and critical of its purview, most notably in this case, the perspect of disability. Disability defines the invisible center around which our contradictory ideology about human ability revolves" (Siebers, *Disability Theory* 8-9).

material of my other studies to my everyday routines. Tobin taught me to think of disability as a critical category and resource for making knowledge and meaning. I continued to pursue Academic Disability Studies through my preliminary exams and into the initial stages of a dissertation project about epilepsy, visual culture, and life narrative; I attended the 2015 Society for Disability Studies convention and helped organize a small conference at UM called "Crip Futurities" the following year. Disability Studies also transformed my practice in all of my professional and scholarly work as I made it a constant priority to engage in questions of access and to cultivate accessibility in all spaces I move in. This prioritization of access remains central here, particularly in my essay "The Question of Figurative Access."

Nonbinary gender transition[10]

By 2014, in part spurred on by this critical re-valuation of disability, I was recognizing and taking seriously that I experience chronic anxiety and depression, and I started therapy to understand and better support myself accordingly. Yet due in large part to academic ableism, there was still a major partition in my day-to-day experience between my academic work and the private, personal work of therapy. By the end of my third semester of grad school, when I was in Tobin's class, my anxiety was so intense that I was losing track of days, experiencing

[10] Gender transition is often talked about as a singular, contained event, and often identified with specific medical procedures. In my experience, it is not so: transition is a diffuse, ambiguous assemblage of moments of intentional re-orientation of oneself within the embodied social landscape of gender. I can't locate a specific beginning or ending point of my transition, but there was a certain period (roughly, late 2016 through 2018) in which I was most intensively engaged in transition-related tasks and practices using language, medical and therapeutic care, dress, movement, and legal bureaucracy.

Here are the gender identities I claim (and how I define them): I am transgender (I reject my at-birth gender designation); AMAB (not only "assigned male at birth," but also continually expected to perform gender as male/masculine); transsexual (I receive hormone replacement therapy); gender nonconforming (I refuse all coercive social expectations regarding gender expression/presentation), and nonbinary (I reject identification with binary categories and I resist binary thinking, even as I live in a binary-obsessed society).

short-term memory loss and other kinds of dissociation. One harrowing afternoon, finding myself hiding in the library stacks for several hours after an awkward yet totally banal conversation in the graduate lounge, I decided to get help.

At first in therapy and then also in my journal, I became curious about the meanings and interpretations that I habitually made of my everyday experiences. My growing critical disability perspective—as well as queer and trans perspectives I found in alliance with disability critique—guided my attention to systemic forces, cultural patterns that I'd taken on and embodied, yet were not inevitable or "natural." I began to recognize that things could be different, that I could do things differently. Over the next few years, I traced some of these meanings to traumatic events in my past that were painful to face. Waves of grief moved through me, and new spaces of possibility opened in my ways of being. I was welcomed by a small but robust community of queer grad students, who accompanied me and cheered me toward experiments with my ways of dressing, talking, moving, and loving.

As my fellowship year began in the fall of 2016, I found myself sinking into depression under the sense of obligation to a dissertation that I didn't want to write. With encouragement from friends and my therapist, I decided that I would take an indefinite hiatus from graduate work to take care of my mental health. As I was making the decision, it felt like a choice between grad school and gender transition, and I thought I would leave grad school permanently. But as I was still on fellowship, one of my mentors, John Whittier-Ferguson, asked me if there was some creative work that I felt passionate about, that I now had some funded time to pursue if I wanted to.

John's prompting threw a spotlight on several questions of my own that had been nagging at me for some time. What *are* journals? How do they work? What do they do for me, for others, for the world? As they first emerged, these questions were primarily directed at my own practice: what are *my* journals? So I spent a few months (late '16 to early '17) methodically reading my journals and creating an experimental piece of writing and collage called "What My Journals Are." In the process, my sense of the transformative potential of journal-keeping practice became clearer, and I started wondering about the possibility of a new dissertation on the subject.

Collective Against White Supremacy

In the fall of 2016, however, I felt fairly certain I was on the way out of academia; I imagined moving to Portland, Oregon, where I have some family and friends, and doing some kind of non-profit work there. And then, that November, a fascist clown became president of the U.S. Suddenly it seemed like a bad idea to leave my current situation, where I had not only community support but also funding and healthcare security, at least for the next couple years, if I stayed in good standing with my PhD program. It felt especially unwise to relocate just then because I was starting to seek hormone replacement therapy, and I had the privilege of belonging to a graduate workers' union, GEO, that had secured insurance coverage for gender-affirming care. So I stopped thinking about leaving, though my new dissertation ideas had yet to take shape. I still felt averse to academia; I wanted something else, a different kind of teaching and learning.

In early December 2016, I joined a new Ann Arbor-based grassroots organization called the Collective Against White Supremacy. The group had first come together in October, in response to a call from Black community leaders for accountability and support from white community members, regarding waves of racist, anti-Black, and alt-right propaganda and vandalism on the UM campus. The organization that emerged was predominantly white in membership; we organized in coalition with and in support of local BIPOC organizations and followed their leadership when they called on us, and in the absence of such calls we initiated actions accountable to the larger causes of dismantling racism and white supremacy.[11]

My most significant contributions to CAWS were in what we called Internal Education. This was CAWS's name for two interdependent learning processes: both a collective, collaborative effort to foster each other's learning about ways to fight racism, and the individual task of self-education directed at learning about and unlearning the harmful racist ideas that each of us have internalized about ourselves and about others. In short, we understood this education as internal in two senses: internal to each individual, and internal to the organization as a set of relationships among its members and our communities.

At the organizational level, we developed a structure to collectively generate the objectives and to distribute the labor of Internal Education. We set aside time at every meeting for education work. We regularly asked members to share questions they had, skills they needed training in, or topics for study related to any aspect of the group's organizing work, to current campaigns, or to antiracist movements broadly. These questions and requests for education would be shared with the whole group, and members were then invited to share and

[11] Our organizing principles are described in the public google document CAWS Anti-Racist Principles v1 (August 2017).

create knowledge on requested topics by volunteering to lead education sessions, with support from the education committee. This structure made it clear that we shared responsibility for our collective learning, that everyone's questions mattered, and anyone might be able to create and share useful knowledge.

Individual reflection was important here as well because, being a predominantly white group, we each had a responsibility to understand the ways in which our lives benefit from and reproduce white supremacy. From early on in my participation, I was interested in the affordances of journal-keeping as a tool for undertaking this spiritually and emotionally demanding task. I sometimes shared journaling prompts in our regular meetings to facilitate reflection about whiteness in our thinking as we did our work. These included questions like: In what ways am I using all-or-nothing, either/or thinking in my assessment of situations or people? How is my planning and decision-making affected by a sense of urgency or perfectionism?[12] Journal-keeping offered a way to hold contained space for deconstructing internal experiences of whiteness, so that white feelings would be less likely to overrun our organizational work where we strove to center BIPOC experiences and needs. When these ideas received encouraging feedback, I started offering informal workshops and consultations to engage organizers in deeper conversations about journaling against white supremacy. I had to step back from CAWS work when I returned to teaching and dissertating in the fall of 2017, but I brought with me a strong sense of potential for journal-keeping as a transformative pedagogical tool adaptable to the needs of specific groups.

[12] These prompts are informed by antiracist education literature about whiteness and white cultural norms by Tema Okun, Robin DiAngelo, and others.

Learning and teaching transformative rhetorics

In 2017-18, I worked as a teaching assistant in two literature courses taught by Dr. Remi Yergeau: one on Disability and Neurodiversity, and one on Cultural Rhetorics. As co-instructor I helped students with writing papers, I facilitated discussions and answered questions in office hours. But at the same time, I was Remi's student, and a student of the rhetorical theories and critical perspectives that filled both syllabi.[13] As my primary advisor while I developed this dissertation, Remi also invited me to use their classroom as a laboratory to experiment with my ideas about journaling pedagogy. I designed a "process journal" assignment for both courses, in which students were asked to create journal entries about course material in relation to their past and present experiences. I also designed workshops with prompted writing and drawing exercises to allow students to experiment with various techniques and discuss these experiments together. I never collected these journal entries nor asked students to show them to me, and neither did Remi. I did solicit reflective writing asking students to tell me about their journaling, which created a feedback loop of self-dialogue for students, and gave me a glimpse into how and whether students were understanding and making use of the exercise.

Such parameters give students space to write and explore their ideas about disability (and other social categories like race and gender), while knowing that no one else will read what they wrote. This is meant to reduce the potential fear of teacherly judgment or censure which can inhibit students' critical curiosity regarding the ideas they hold about disability. The reflections were an opportunity for students to teach me about the potential uses and pitfalls of journal-keeping pedagogy. Indeed, at the end of the semester, many students in Disability

[13] Especially: Kenneth Burke, Margaret Price, Rita Dhamoon, Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab.

and Neurodiversity said that journal exercises allowed them to practice using new language without fear of "getting it wrong" or "offending anyone." Others said that in their journals they were able to feel less shame and articulate new forms of identity around their own experiences of disability. The assurance that no one would read what students wrote, unless they chose to share it, disrupted the routine expectation that anything a student creates in a class context is subject to high-stakes evaluation that pressures students to "get it right." Thus, these writing practices helped students develop new critical awareness of and access to "disability" as a category of meaning-making that structures the world, and everyone's experience of it, in some way.

In Cultural Rhetorics the following semester, we investigated rhetoric not as an object but as a lived process and complex array of practices.[14] The goal of that course was to understand, first, how power circulates through cultural meaning-making systems and second, how those systems are embodied in the material practices of people in specific contexts. I continued asking students to keep journals and share reflections with me. In this class I did not get a clear sense that students found the journal exercises as specifically useful as they did the semester before (at least one student called them "a waste of time" in course evaluations), but our discussions were lively and in helping students unpack difficult theoretical texts I learned a great deal about how to use rhetorics to cultivate critical, transformative access to meaning-making. Several of the readings assigned in that course remain central to this project: particularly Kenneth Burke's "Four Master Tropes," Rita Dhamoon's "Mainstreaming Intersectionality," and "Our Story Begins Here" by the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab.

[14] Access Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab.

The central assignment of the Cultural Rhetorics course was a critical discourse analysis (CDA) essay, in which students were asked to analyze a piece of "public discourse" to expose the workings of systemic power reflected in that text.[15] It was a difficult assignment because it required students to attend to multiple dimensions of power at work across multiple "levels" of discourse, from small textual features to higher-level contexts and systems of meaning. Students could choose "texts" of any form: for example, one wrote about SZA's album *CTRL*; another examined clothing tags gathered from a local shopping mall.[16] Thus in their essays and in class discussions students had to contend with a dizzying array of social and textual variables. Our readings in rhetorical and political theory provided frameworks for navigating this array, but these theories themselves are quite complex and were initially unfamiliar to many of us (including me).

For instance, to conceptualize power, we used a framework of "intersectional-type" theory according to political philosopher Rita Dhamoon, who describes a social and cultural "matrix of meaning-making" that functions in the interacting dimensions of *identity* (e.g., "Black women"); *category* (race, gender); *process* (racialization, gendering); and *system* (racism, sexism).[17] On a particularly memorable day, students in both of my discussion sections were

[15] CDA is an important background to my thinking about tropes, as I discuss in "Methodology of Tropes."

[16] This is intended to be an explicitly anti-oppressive assignment, as described by Thomas Huckin in "Critical Discourse Analysis and the Discourse of Condescension," which we read and discussed as a class: "[T]he main purpose of critical discourse analysis is to understand how people are manipulated by public discourse and thereby subjected to abuses of power" (Huckin 158); CDA approaches "'are not detached and impersonal, but rather have as their object something which they are against'; and they have 'consequences' in the sense that they 'identify the possibilities of future action available to participants" (Huckin 156, quoting McKerrow).

[17] Dhamoon's rejects definitive grid or chart representations of this "matrix": meaning-making." "The idea of a matrix of meaning-making aims to foreground an expanded Foucauldian understanding of power so as to capture the ways in which processes of differentiation and systems of domination interrelate. The focus of analysis is thus not "just" domination but the very interactive processes and structures in which meanings of privilege and penalty are produced, reproduced, and resisted in contingent and relational ways. While it may not be possible to develop

struggling to access one key piece of Dhamoon's argument: that in order to be critically effective, intersectional analyses must shift attention beyond "identity" and "category" to focus instead on "process" and "system." The students could not get a handle on what "process" referred to, or how "it" could be perceived or observed, let alone analyzed. They didn't know what they should be looking for as they applied CDA to their chosen text.

To help clear their confusion, I decided to use my own experience of "gendering" processes as an example. Gender was constantly absorbing my attention at the time: only a year earlier while on fellowship I had come out as transgender; I was still deeply engaged in my transition work of getting access to hormone therapy, developing my gender expressions in clothing and style, getting used to being trans on campus and educating acquaintances about my name change and pronouns (they/them/theirs), navigating assumptions and stares and other public cisnormative behaviors, making decisions about when to disclose my transness or what bathrooms to use. Throughout those months I constantly studied the signs and techniques of gendering as I moved through public space. Every day I would write and draw about it all in my journal. I shared examples with my students of how I observed "gendering" in an accumulation of language choices spoken and written, gestures, bodily comportments, spatial arrangements, all of which referred to implicit assessments of the body as reflecting one of two mutually exclusive ideals, "male" or "female." I described how I used these observations every day to inform tactical choices about how to move, as a nonbinary person, in cisnormative

---

a diagram of a matrix of meaning-making on paper or in text form because it entails movement among multiple interactions and across time, dimensions, and levels, [an illustration] provides some sense of what this might look like. [The illustration] may appear to be impenetrable as a research and policy tool, but I present it as a pictorial representation of the paradigmatic shift that an intersectional-type lens invites" (238). The illustration in question looks like a piece of abstract art: a swirl of light and dark areas, blurry lines and sharper ones in nested and criss-crossing curves.

environments. It seemed to me that my examples gave students enough grasp on "process" to proceed with their assignments.

Since then, I've been working to articulate the transformative potential I saw in journal-keeping, this practice of critical attention to processes of power, bringing Dhamoon's sense of "process" as an analytical lens together with the sense of writing as a "process" (the name of the "Process Journal" assignments I developed over those two semesters thus came to signal this conjunction) that is embodied in writing practices. My personal journal-keeping practice had given me critical access to gendering processes, as I explained it to my students, because my journal-keeping is not just about acts of writing or keeping records, it's also about a practice of everyday attention in which any lived experience becomes potentially meaningful. By paying attention to things across stretches of time and space and attending to patterns and investigating processes of meaning, we can find ways to tap into the circuits of power, and thereby shape change.[18]

The following semester, Fall 2018, I continued to explore the affordances of journal-keeping assignments to support students' critical investigations of processes and systems of meaning-making, in a first-year writing course focused on themes of disability and representation. I discuss that experience in my Journal-Keeping essay and in my Conclusion.

My work at the Center for Research on Teaching and Learning at UM has also played a significant part in my developing understanding of anti-oppressive teaching and learning, particularly as a Graduate Student Instructional Consultant specializing in Race and Ethnicity

[18] This is like the observing of things that Octavia E. Butler describes (through her *Parables* protagonist Lauren Oya Olamina): if you pay attention to what's happening and think about what comes next, you can read the future and more effectively act to change it; and that's what it means to "shape god" or shape change. Butler and her readers are important scholarly models for me, as I discuss later in this essay and in "Methodology of Practice."

(R&E) Teaching. This specialization was intended to support GSIs teaching courses that satisfy a course requirement on "Race and Ethnicity" in the College of Literature, Sciences, and Arts (LSA) at UM. I discuss the history of this requirement and my work in this role later in this essay.

Scholarship as practice

Throughout this project, I use "scholarship" as a general term, at times interchangeable with "teaching and learning." This word also deserves some critical attention. I'm thinking here about two interconnected figures or tropes: Scholar and Scholarship. Scholar describes a person playing a certain role; as one who creates and shares knowledge, I am a scholar. Scholarship refers to a particular set of activities or practices; in doing my research and teaching and writing, I am doing scholarship.

There is a relationship between the two. The University provides scripts and rationales for understanding this relationship as a linear one. I'm writing a dissertation, the capstone requirement of my PhD program, a course of training in how to be a professional scholar, how to do professional scholarship in the Humanities (specifically, in English Language and Literature). To make a dissertation, I must practice scholarship to the point of producing a certain kind of result. By doing this scholarship, I become a scholar; if I can produce and defend a Dissertation, I will become a Doctor.

As of this writing (March 2022), I've been enrolled as a student in a six-year PhD program for nine-and-a-half years. The ways I've found to practice scholarship during this time have looked very different than what the institution seemed to expect of me. Working and

living in trans-crip time,[19] I've come to reject the idea that the relationship between Scholar and Scholarship is strictly linear. As Thich Nhat Hanh writes of "a thinker" and "thinking": "You cannot have the one without the other, but you also cannot have the one before the other; they manifest at the same time" (*The Art of Living* 23). Even as I'm eager to finish my dissertation, receive my doctorate, complete this ritual—the idea that I will then be a Scholar has become less meaningful to me than the recognition that I am already doing Scholarship.

The University makes powerful, persuasive claims about the meanings of these figures and the relationships between them. (By "the University," I mean not specifically my University but the historical structures and general patterns, the bureaucracies and institutional logics that largely organize how higher education functions.) In the University, "Scholar" is a role designated by particular scripts and expectations. Through cultural shifts and a lot of important political and scholarly work, these scripts have widened and diversified somewhat, yet certain assumptions and expectations about Scholar and Scholarship still dominate in academia and in other social realms. Scholar can be a general figure with various more specific iterations: "teacher," "expert," "researcher," "learned person," "producer of scholarly publications." Scholar is a mark of distinction, as opposed to a "student," who is less a maker of knowledge than a receiver of instruction. (An exceptional few of those designated as "students" by the University might be called Scholars if they qualify in particular ways—e.g., winning

[19] Alexandre Baril offers a detailed explanation of "trans-crip time": "For trans people, "trans-crip time" means the imposition of cisnormative temporality, both in our experience of time and the way it is inscribed in our bodies and social/legal identities. In cisnormative societies, both disabled and trans people depend on a variety of people and supports (biotechnological, medical, legal, etc.) that require more time due to systemic obstacles. Trans people also spend considerable time educating other groups about the oppression and difficulties they face, coping with emotional issues caused by micro- and macro-aggression and violence, finding places where they are welcome, and dealing with negative reactions from family members, friends, coworkers, and the public. Trans people experience a kind of "wasted time" that could be avoided if structures and institutions were better adapted to their needs (Baril, 161).

scholarships—which further emphasizes the hieratic significance of this figure.) The University distinguishes different roles of Scholar and student through credentials (credits, grades, certificates and degrees) that signify the fulfillment of predetermined requirements or expectations; they signify, in other words, that a certain task has been completed, a product has been produced. First, I was a Doctoral Student, and then when I passed prelims I became a Doctoral Candidate. If I complete this dissertation, the University will give me a doctoral degree, making me a Doctor.

In this dissertation, I want to embody a different idea of Scholar and practice a different kind of Scholarship. Following bell hooks, I "make a distinction between the practice of being an intellectual/teacher and one's role as a member of the academic profession" (*Teaching to Transgress* 16). Heeding the words of decolonial rhetorician Malea Powell, I want to "*always* reframe 'the' way as *one* way, as a set of specific cultural values embodied in particular practices," to enable myself and others to recognize and interrogate "those value systems at work" (Powell 402).[20] What values does our scholarship serve? There is a growing body of work demonstrating that the University remains a colonizing, racist, ableist project, an enterprise that largely serves to uphold violent and oppressive social hierarchies, even amid highly visible efforts by institutions to promote "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion."[21] It's important to ask, to what extent does scholarship about systems of oppression bring about change or

[20] When we struggle and suffer in academia, sometimes we are told: "This is just how it works. This is just the way it is." A professor once said to me, regarding a working pace that I knew was unrealistic for me given my anxiety and depression: "it's going to hurt--but if you want it, you can do it." This ableist advice only made me feel more ashamed when I couldn't maintain that pace.

[21] Access, for example: Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included*; Matthew Johnson, *Undermining Racial Justice*; Jay Dolmage, *Academic Ableism*.

transformation? Minich asserts that "scrutiny of normative ideologies should occur not for its own sake but with the goal of producing knowledge in support of justice for people with stigmatized bodies and minds" ("Enabling Whom?" n.p.). I read Minich's phrase "*not for its own sake*" as referring to (and rejecting) those institutional values that are increasingly neoliberal/capitalist, creating more hierarchy and less access to spaces of learning, values that are thus at odds with many social justice principles.

"Scholarship of the living"

In the last year, I've found some of my most important teachers in transformative meaning-making work by listening to podcasts: *How to Survive the End of the World*, created and hosted by Autumn Brown and adrienne maree brown; *Octavia's Parables*, by adrienne maree brown and Toshi Reagon; and *Finding Our Way*, by Prentis Hemphill. To this group of creators, I would add Alexis Pauline Gumbs, an independent scholar who has been a repeat guest on all three podcasts, and the author (most recently) of *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*. These Black feminist practitioners demonstrate a different kind of scholarship than that professed by academic institutions, a scholarship that is more clear and transparent about how its knowledge-creation goals are strategically connected to the practitioners' values in transformative, anti-oppressive movement.

I've come to think of their learning and teaching work as a "scholarship of the living." This is a paraphrase of language used by adrienne maree brown and Toshi Reagon in their podcast's deep conversations about Octavia E. Butler's novels. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* tell the story of Lauren Olamina, a young Black woman, movement

leader and creator of a new spiritual and practical philosophy called Earthseed. The central idea of Earthseed is that "God is Change," meaning that change is the only certainty in our existence, and that everything changes. Earthseed suggests that we can "shape God" by learning how to live in more strategic relationship to the constantly, inevitably changing circumstances of life. In the world of the *Parable* novels, Lauren has composed a whole set of scriptural verses, titled *Earthseed: The Books of the Living*, to represent this philosophy and teach it to others. Not only does the story illustrate the philosophy through the choices its characters make throughout, and not only does it depict other characters engaging critically with Earthseed and learning from and with Lauren about it; Butler also gives her readers the full text of 35 unique verses, one at the start of each chapter of the two *Parable* novels. adrienne maree brown often talks about the significant influence that Butler's fiction, especially the *Parable* series, has had on her approach to transformative movement work; the philosophy of Earthseed is a key inspiration for brown's theory of social transformation explained in her book *Emergent Strategy* (2017).

Throughout their podcast *Octavia's Parables*, adrienne maree brown and her collaborator Toshi Reagon—a folk musician and creator of an opera based on *Parable of the Sower*—describe their project as "scholarship," as a study of Butler's work for the purpose of harvesting lessons that may be strategically useful for those engaged in transformative movement work. They reflect on Butler's work itself as a form of scholarship, not only in the depth of her research for the content of her fiction (which exhibits deep historically accurate detail alongside its more fantastical elements), but also in Butler's practice of paying close attention to the truth of events around her in the 1990s (when she wrote the *Parable* series) to

be able to anticipate what might happen next. Toshi and adrienne[22] read the apocalyptic conditions depicted in the *Parables*' fictional 2020s California as a "warning" about what would come if society didn't change course. From Butler's example, brown and Walida Imarisha developed the concept of "visionary fiction," suggesting that science fiction could be a resource for imagining transformative movement paths into the future.[23] Their concept of visionary fiction repudiates the mainstream privileging of white male authors in science fiction genres as well as the western hierarchy of scientific rationality over imagination. And it repudiates the idea that science fiction/fantasy writing is a form of "escape" from reality, suggesting to the contrary that such writing is a useful tool for grappling with painful realities head-on. Indeed, in their reading of the *Parables*, adrienne and Toshi find many ways in which the conditions depicted in the novels are in fact happening in real time in 2020-21, such as increasingly enclosed spaces of safety that are exclusively for the wealthy, the collapse of public infrastructures, and the growing frequency of climate-related disasters.[24]

I think of such work as "scholarship of the living," not just in reference to Butler's Earthseed text, but also to how adrienne and Toshi reflect on its title phrase "Books of the Living" in their conversation. In Episode 11 of the first season of *Octavia's Parables*, adrienne expresses interest in a "politics of the living" as a reclaiming of the political terminology of "life"

[22] Rather than using their last names as would be conventional in academic writing, I use their first names in citations of their podcast because it feels more appropriate, given that this is how they address each other.

[23] Access brown and Imarisha's *Octavia's Brood*, an anthology of science fiction stories written by radical movement organizers.

[24] adrienne maree brown's other podcast, a collaboration with her sister Autumn Brown, exemplifies a scholarship of the living as a practice of not just surviving apocalyptic conditions but "learning from apocalypse--with grace, rigor, and curiosity," as they say in the show's tagline.

from the so-called "pro-life" movement ("the most murderous people ever," Toshi comments). In resistance to the mainstream politics of neoliberal capitalism that pursues accumulation of wealth and power at the cost of massive destruction of life, a politics of the living entails surviving the apocalyptic conditions that result from mainstream politics, in order to shape the future differently.[25] In the first episode of another podcast, *How to Survive the End of the World*, the Brown sisters adrienne and Autumn acknowledge that millions of contemporary Black people, as the descendents of colonized and enslaved ancestors, as well as Indigenous peoples across the world as the survivors of colonial genocide and continuing occupation, have already experienced worlds ending, perhaps multiple times through histories of displacement and diaspora. In this sense, the politics of the living is a politics of insistently living meaningful lives in defiance of social conditions designed to dehumanize and destroy one's people and one's worlds.

The meaning of "living" here entails a particular understanding and valuation of life, where all forms of life are interdependent; there is no hierarchy of living things with humans at the top; all living things have value; all living things have needs and experiences that are valid.[26] If the politics of the living thus asserts the value of all life, then to practice a scholarship of the living similarly looks to all phenomena we experience as potential "teachers." Yet the

[25] To put the politics of the living in current context, adrienne and Toshi here reference an earlier conversation (episode 8) recorded in the midst of pandemic lockdowns in spring 2020, in which adrienne suggested that people who chose not to stay home, wear masks in public, or practice other measures to reduce contagion of the coronavirus--that such people were exhibiting a politics of "collective suicidal ideation," the idea being that the insistence on individual freedom not to wear masks entails an implicit acceptance of illness and death on a collective scale.

[26] Disability Justice offers important arguments on this point, about what counts as a valid human life; I'm thinking of the DJ principle of "wholeness" (basically, you are whole and wholly valid/valuable, exactly as you are; access Sins Invalid) and the disability activist slogan "not dead yet." Additional sources also inform my thinking about the meanings of "living," including Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Art of Living* and work by Indigenous scholar Kim TallBear.

scholarship of the living also emphasizes the primary role of the learner as practitioner in this knowledge-exchange. Butler (writing as her narrator-protagonist Lauren) articulates this in one of the Earthseed verses:

> Your teachers
> are all around you.
> All that you perceive,
> All that you experience,
> All that is given to you
> or taken from you,
> All that you live or hate, need or fear
> Will teach you—
> If you will learn.
>
> (*Parable of the Sower*, 279)

In *Emergent Strategy*, brown offers an example of this as she learns from the flocking behavior of birds, the way ants and bees organize their colonies, the interdependence of trees and fungi, and the physical properties of water (to name just a few of her teachers). From this learning she develops principles to guide transformative social movements: intentional adaptation, decentralization and interdependence, creating more possibilities, nonlinear and iterative approach, and more. Like "visionary fiction," such study is an imaginative practice to understand what we can learn from the way mushrooms detoxify the earth and turn toxins into nourishment, for instance, or the way starlings coordinate their movements in a flock. In sum, "emergent strategy" refers to making use of such parallels and connections between natural processes and transformative organizing practices. The parallels are *instructive* in that the learner (brown as a model of this practice, or whoever is practicing emergent-strategic

scholarship) is looking for information and insights that can help them make more effective choices and decisions that shape the future in line with their values.[27]

"The classroom"

To throw the scholarship of the living into greater relief, we can compare it to "the classroom" as a practice-trope, a figure of certain teaching and learning engagements. "The classroom" brings to mind a certain kind of built and interactive environment. It's likely a physical room of walls, a door, windows (if we're lucky not to be in one of those windowless basement classrooms), furnished with desks, maybe a chalkboard. It may or may not be decorated with learning materials. It's a place where a certain number of people gather at an appointed time to learn and/or to teach according to their designated roles as students or teachers. Certain kinds of learning and teaching happen "in" the classroom ("lectures," "discussions," "lessons") while other kinds ("homework," "studying") happen "out" of it, in other locations.

Petra Kuppers invites her classroom participants[28] to reflect on what we do in a classroom, the embodied rituals and conventions that maintain the space we recognize as a classroom: "Rearrange yourself. Get up, and change your position in the classroom: find a body shape and a part of the room in which you can make a comfortable temporary home. … Look

[27] These are metaphorical juxtapositions, mushrooms or starlings versus movements for justice. There are also tropological aspects to some of the specific elements of emergent strategy, like: fractals are synecdochic, the part for the whole. Intentional adaptation is ironic, a kind of joining of opposites.

[28] I am quoting from Kuppers' book here, and I am also recalling my experience of participating in these exercises in her graduate seminar on Disability Arts and Culture in Winter 2015.

around. Some of you might be curled up, some leaning comfortably into corners, some hovering on windowsills.… You are becoming familiar with your classroom in a different way, and you are exploring new spatial relations to one another" (4-5). She prompts further experimentation with classroom interaction: she has us lie on the floor, first belly down, heads toward one another, then on our backs looking up at the ceiling. She asks us to share about how these positions make us feel and to notice the specificity of our normal classroom embodiments that we may have taken for granted. After a while, we "move back to the relative safety and comfort of chairs" (5), and we move into a discussion about how "ideas of education, access, communication practices, and definitions of knowledge have created the particular classroom communities we find ourselves in today" (6). Thus, we begin to question how the classroom might also be a space where certain kinds of people are expected or not, welcome or not. "The classroom" can be an institutional building-block in two senses, as both an architectural form and a logistical unit for organizing the labor and delivery of education, from the "one-room schoolhouse" to the campus with any number of classrooms. The classroom has been an important object of inquiry for questions of access and rhetoric in Disability Studies; such inquiry proceeds on both material and ideological lines.[29]

"In the classroom" is not only a physical location, inside of a particular space of walls and floor and ceiling, it also means being involved in a particular kind of engagement, a set of intentional practices for making and sharing knowledge: learning, teaching, studying, training, education, schooling, coursework, classwork. "In class" means more than being in the

[29] Access, for example, Price; Dolmage; Lewiecki-Wilson and Brueggemann; Brueggemann and Kleege; Titchkosky; Kerschbaum.

classroom physically; it means being actively involved in the engagement unfolding. I can be physically in a classroom without being "in class," i.e. if the classroom is otherwise empty, if class is not in session, or if I'm unable to or choosing not to pay attention or participate in ways that others would recognize as valid.[30] "In class" can mean being where one is supposed to be (as opposed to "absent," "skipping," or "truant") and comporting oneself in the right way. The classroom and participation have become more complicated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which redefined traditional classrooms as either "in-person" or multiplying variations of online, synchronous, asynchronous, and "hybrid" classrooms.

"The classroom" is conventionally conceived (pre-pandemic) as a space apart from "real life," in a few different ways. This separation is a function of white supremacy culture in education, that depersonalizes teaching and learning through values of standardization and rationality.[31] bell hooks describes how "college education is so often geared toward the future, the perceived rewards that the imagined future will bring that it is difficult to teach students that the present is a place of meaning" (*Teaching Community* 165-66). For Thich Nhat Hanh, this overvaluation of the future amounts to not actually living in the present: "We tend to be alive in the future, not now. We say, 'wait until I finish school and get my Ph.D. degree, and then I will be really alive" (Nhat Hanh, quoted in hooks, *Teaching Community* 172). We "postpone being alive" so much that "[w]e may never be alive at all in our entire life" (ibid). The classrooms where such futuristic thinking holds sway are thus distinctly at odds with the scholarship of the living, which finds meaning in the present.

[30] Disability studies scholars like Patricia Dunn and Margaret Price have lots to say about the politics of presence and participation in classrooms.

[31] Access Brunsma et al.; Yancy and Davidson.

Scholarship of the living might not need classrooms as we now know them. *Octavia's Parables* is classroom-free, community-based teaching and learning project that centers Black feminist, disability justice, queer justice, and environmental justice values. For a different kind of example, Marge Piercy offers a vivid fictional illustration of what a classroom-less culture of teaching and learning could look like, in her novel *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Piercy's protagonist Connie travels through time to a liberated community in the year 2137, in what we currently call Massachusetts, where she observes radically different forms of education than what she knows in her 1970s present:

> In one of the spiderweb gardens an old man with a bush of white hair and a gnarled face, arms like driftwood scoured by salt and wind, was picking peas into a basket and weeding into another, with two kids of nine or ten working on either side.
>
> "How come they aren't in school?" she asked. "Is school out already for the summer?"
>
> "That *is* school," Luciente said, drawing Connie nearer to them.
>
> "This one is lamb's-quarters, no?" one kid was asking.
>
> "Can you eat it?"
>
> "Fasure."
>
> "Look at the shape of the pea flowers. Most legumes have irregular flowers with five petals—see, the lower ones join in a keel, like the keel on the fishing boats. The two at the sides are like spread wings. Then you have one on top. Most legumes have leaves like these." …
>
> As they strolled on, [Connie] said, "But they can't possibly learn as much that way as they would in a classroom with a book!"
>
> "They can read. We all read by four or so," Jackrabbit said. "But who wants to grow up with a head full of facts in boxes? We never leave school and go to work. We're always working, always studying. [What we know] has to be tried out all the time. Placed against what people need. We care a lot *how* things are done." (138)

Whereas classroom practices might associate learning with "facts in boxes," and might understand learning as a finite process that ends when we "leave school," for the scholarship of the living, learning is an ongoing process of testing knowledge against the actual needs of living

beings. Rather than a separation between learning and living, the two are thoroughly interwoven. Scholarship of the living is not linked to a particular bounded space ("room") or an organized hierarchy ("class"); it finds opportunities for learning as connected to all of life, where the interconnectedness of all living things matters for how scholarship happens and what its goals are.

My point in highlighting these differences between "the classroom" and "the scholarship of the living" isn't that we should abandon the idea of the classroom, if that were possible. I want to use both "the classroom" and "scholarship of the living" as two figures that organize learning and teaching engagements in particular ways. As such we can think of them as *practice-tropes*, figures we can use reflexively to observe and be curious about our habitual ways of doing the things they describe (teaching and learning), to imagine alternatives, and to focus critical choices and changes to how we go about these practices. "The classroom" remains a useful commonplace for pedagogical theorists and educational activists. bell hooks believed that the college classroom could be a space of real transformative possibility, that it was not simply an engine of institutional reproduction (*Teaching to Transgress* 40). By encouraging students to find meaning and value in the present, hooks brings something like the scholarship of the living into her classroom ("Spiritual Matters in the Classroom," *Teaching Community* 166), which indicates that the two tropes are not wholly incompatible and might overlap in practice.

Pedagogical theory is an important resource that often takes shape in written texts intended for reading and research, outside of "the classroom," by practitioners of teaching and learning, who will take the insights of that theory and apply it in their practice. As I write *this*

work of pedagogical theory, I think of teachers reading this and hopefully taking the theoretical tools and concepts I offer, and using them in their own classrooms, the places where they do their own teaching and learning work, where they practice their scholarship. In this "own" there is a sense of teacher's directive authority over what happens in that space, an authority that is backed by existing institutional hierarchies. I am wary of this, and I am curious about this. Whose classroom is it? In using the "classroom" practice-trope intentionally I want to recognize that the spatial enclosure (room) can be useful and also that the "classed" nature of such spaces is a fact of the world we currently live in, not to be either ignored or resignedly accepted, but to be restlessly confronted and challenged.

As a practice-trope, the classroom is complex. While we shouldn't underestimate its strategic utility for transformative work, it's important to recognize how such strategies can be co-opted by the institutional values that still shape classroom engagement. This complexity is apparent in the history of Black student activism at the University of Michigan. Black Action Movement protesters of 1969-70, 1975, and 1987 understood the college classroom as a resource for antiracist institutional change and their organizing led to the creation, in 1990, of a "Race and Ethnicity" course requirement for all LSA students.[32] In 2013-14, during my second year at UM, a new generation of student activists used social media to bring national attention to racism on campus with the "Being Black at U. Michigan" campaign with the hashtag #BBUM (Vega). These highly effective protests created major disruptions of campus life in pursuit of

[32] Access LSA, "Reviewing R&E." In a 2019 "GSI Learning Community on Antiracist Teaching" session at UM's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, Dr. Whitney Peoples emphasized the importance of students' strategy in creating the course and she was about taking that seriously even though there were problems with the implementation.

demands that included racial parity in enrollment (up to 10% to reflect the demographics of Michigan; Black enrollment remained shamefully low at 4.4% in 2018, according to the *Michigan Daily*: access Hiyama and Basha) as well as a course requirement for all students to study race and racism. In becoming institutionalized, the purposes of the R&E requirement shift in line with institutional priorities: the university's language often depicts the requirement's value as preparing students for success in future careers in diverse workplaces,[33] while racist disparities in access, a racist climate, and other harms continue.[34]

Working with anti-oppressive values for teaching

The case of the R&E requirement is a good example of the importance of vigilantly examining what values are being served in our practices of teaching and learning. To end this introduction, I want to briefly discuss how I approach values.

Working with "values" doesn't mean taking on or imposing a fixed set of principles. The values implicit in our practices may not be fully clear to us and they will shift over time, depending on circumstances and the interests of those involved. Luna Hughson, a freelance writer, political organizer, and conflict-transformation facilitator based in southeast Michigan, offers the following definitions that I find helpful:

> Values are the qualities of life and relationship that we claim, nurture, and enact in our lives; they guide our decisions and actions. Commitments according to

[33] In Dr. Peoples's seminar we compared two sample statements about the importance of the R&E requirement offered in a 2016 report (available on LSA's website cited above), one addressed to faculty and the other addressed to students. The student-facing statement positioned the values of R&E coursework as helpful for career preparation, while the faculty-facing statement appealed to interests in social justice (in albeit fairly vague terms).

[34] Matthew Johnson's *Undermining Racial Justice* is a detailed historical study of how University of Michigan administration has repeatedly co-opted and neutralized the movement gains of Black student activists.

> values are known as *principles*, and values put into action are known as *values-based practices*. (n.p.)[35]

Because there are often differences between "claimed" and "enacted values," values-based practice requires an ongoing, collaborative questioning and articulating the meanings of and rationales for the ways we do things. Hughson offers a set of questions for personal reflection to help us articulate our claimed values and to reflect on the extent to which we are enacting those values.[36]

There are many excellent models of thinking about values and principles to inform anti-oppressive movement and scholarship practices. I have a few favorite examples. One is of course adrienne maree brown's six "Elements of Emergent Strategy" (43): fractals (relationships between small and large), intentional adaptation, interdependence and decentralization, nonlinear and iterative, resilience, and creating more possibilities. Another is Sins Invalid's "Ten Principles of Disability Justice": intersectionality, leadership of those most impacted, anti-capitalist politic, cross-movement solidarity, recognizing wholeness, sustainability, cross-disability solidarity, interdependence, collective access, and collective liberation.[37] Both of these models are in the background of my thinking throughout this project.

---

[35] Hughson shares their educational materials on Instagram as @conflicttransformation.

[36] "If you're not sure what your values are, you may find some clarity in answering these questions: What qualities do I respect or look up to in others? What actions or behaviors make me feel good about myself? What have I been doing/saying when I have felt most confident and joyful? When a problem needs to be solved that impacts many people, how do I think people should handle that? When faced with a challenge, how did I respond in ways that felt good, honorable, valuable? When people have made mistakes, what responses have felt the best to me? If you're not sure if you are enacting your values, you may find clarity in answering these questions: Have I modeled the qualities I respect most in others? Have my actions and decisions aligned with those qualities? When I have approached a problem, have I felt good about the process and my part in it? Do I put my money, time, energy, and other resources into a life aligned with those qualities? Have I been feeling proud/confident/secure in my actions and decisions lately? Who have I cared for or reached out to lately?" (Hughson, n.p.)

[37] Access Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Care Work* (26-29).

AnaLouise Keating offers a third model that is more directly designed for classroom use, her "presuppositions for class discussions":

1. Social injustice exists.
2. Our educations have been biased.
3. Blame is not useful, but accountability is.
4. We are related to all that lives.
5. Categories and labels shape our perception.
6. People have a basic goodness. (*Teaching Transformation*, 125-6)

These are not expressing values or principles so much as working assumptions about what is "true" as a baseline for classroom practice, yet they reflect ideas of valuing all life and the goodness of people. The purpose of presupposing that "injustice exists" (etc.) is so that no energy needs to be spent debating or proving that there is oppression; with this presupposed, the work is to end it.

As the task of articulating values is ongoing and unfinished, I'm going to end by sharing some excerpts from my personal writing on the question of values. These notes represent my incomplete and messy thought process about the values that I claim and hope to enact in my work. I also mean by this to suggest that journal-sharing can be a useful practice for reflecting on values in a collaborative, community-oriented way. Much of this thinking was held in conversation with Max Baumkel, without whose support as my "dissertation doula" (his word for his practice of combining productivity coaching with therapeutic emotional support) I would not have been able to complete this project.

Email to Max, August 20, 2020

> *I asked my therapist for their thoughts on what "values" means and how to use it as a framework for action, for intentions and decisions. They talked about approaching values not as a big life-encompassing framework but as a*

situational metric: in this situation, what is most important to me? and thinking about how difficult situations might be difficult specifically because they put two or more of my values in conflict. I'm sitting with this and thinking about how to apply it to the problem of finishing my diss.

Journal entry, August 24, 2020

Max is my dissertation doula—we've been talking about values. I'm deepening my spiritual dimension/practice. Yesterday Max asked me what I meant when I described some of my diss intentions as spiritual.... I talked about overlaps of Buddhism and activism/peace work in Thich Nhat Hanh's work, and how some of my scholarly influences and interlocutors also draw on TNH (bell hooks, Asao Inoue). I said that the meditation on emptiness as interbeing[38]... helps me have compassion for "doing wrong," "being wrong," "being mistaken," "making mistakes," "error," "failure," as part of a learning process. Then I articulated a value that I have: Learning as not just acquiring ideas, skills, and knowledge; or asking questions (engaging actively with "what is"); but also embracing wrongness/mistakenness/error as a continual starting point. Learning as "to be always starting again."

Notes on a conversation with Max, December 12, 2020

Values in the context of writing

Embracing autonomy, vulnerability, & interdependence as values

Question about personal definition of how to approach dissertation vs. how institution defines dissertation (where they overlap, where they depart)

Journal entry, December 7, 2021

What are my values?

- *Being in relationship with "all that lives," and growing more creative relationship connections that foster life possibilities.*
- *Facing the realities of harm and suffering, and understanding causes of suffering, together in relationship with other people.*

[38] Access Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Other Shore*.

- *Abolition of systematic, cyclical uses of harm and abuse (seeing them as rooted in values that are yet strongly held by many people); abolition of relations that are based on intentional, purposive distributions of harm and violence.*
- *Embracing joy and celebrating pleasure without causing harm.*
- *Creative practices (such as "science fiction") that strengthen the understanding that another world is possible; that concrete reality is not singular or fixed; never throwing up our hands saying "it is what it is," and instead saying "how could it be different?"—and then organizing to bring that world into being.*
- *Curiosity and learning, openness to new ideas, experiences, all teachers (human/nonhuman, living/nonliving), asking specific and open-ended questions, not punishing mistakes, no failure only data.*
- *Interdependence of all people / all living beings in decision-making; collectivity, finding ways to let all beings have a "voice" / be accounted for in making decisions that affect them (nothing about us without us).*
- *Interdependence in care, helping, etc. Communities, collectives are responsible for taking care of every member (human/nonhuman, living/nonliving)*
- *Autonomy and consent: each individual gets to choose and the collective is responsible for protecting that choice, obtaining consent, etc.*

Chapter II.
Methodology of Tropes: Methods of Troping to Shape Change

This essay offers a meditation on the critical and creative use of tropes (rhetorical figures, metaphors, etc.) for anti-oppressive engagements in meaning-making systems. In the prologue I briefly model this practice before presenting an extended discussion of the terms *trope*, *troping*, and *tropology*; the background of my theorizing in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research; and finally a "troping methods toolkit" drawn from exemplary practitioners of such methods including Kenneth Burke, Sara Ahmed, and the fandom community project TVTropes.org.

This "Methodology of Tropes" is one of the two interwoven critical methodologies through which I approach the study of meaning-making, the other being "Methodology of Practice." In "The Question of Figurative Access," I consider at length how tropes constitute resources for access from the critical perspective of disability theory.

Prologue: "Racism is a Pandemic"

In June 2020, amid pandemic lockdowns and renewed uprisings against anti-Black police violence in the U.S., I keep hearing people describe racism as a pandemic. I first notice it while walking in my neighborhood, on a sign taped to a neighbor's front door that reads simply: "Racism is a Pandemic, too." Later I hear a psychologist use it on a podcast I'm listening to while cleaning my apartment.[39] My university's then-President Mark Schlissel uses it on June 2 in an email to the UM community, in response to protests against the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. Schlissel describes racism as "another kind of pandemic," an "appalling pestilence" that "continues to plague our communities." I see variations of the metaphor on protest signs and memes in my Instagram feed: for example, @thehastingscenter, a bioethics organization, posts an image of a sign reading "Racism Is a Virus."[40]

I collect these and other examples, wondering, why these metaphors—these tropes—and what are they doing? For George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors do significant conceptual work for us in that they enable us to use familiar experiences to understand other, ostensibly unrelated and unfamiliar ideas (*Metaphors We Live By*). We're several months familiar with certain ideas of "pandemic" at this point. My neighbor's assertion "Racism is a Pandemic, too" invites us to use what we know about "Pandemic" to understand "Racism," and insists that we give the latter as much attention as the former. Another sign (again on Instagram) elaborates the metaphor into a treatment plan, prescribing a series of actions that people should take to fight the "contagion" of racism:

---

[39] The psychologist is Dan Siegel, talking about his theory of the "window of tolerance," on Treleaven's *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness Podcast*.

[40] Thanks to Liz Dietz for sending me this example.

Treat Racism Like Covid-19

1. Assume you have it
2. Listen to experts about it
3. Don't spread it
4. Be willing to change your life to end it[41]

This 4-step treatment condenses a lot of practices we've learned from several months of dealing with Covid-19 and refigures them as an anti-racist action plan. The trope thus creates a kind of access, what Jay Dolmage often calls "ways to move," by pointing out some things we can do.[42] According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors "may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent" (156).[43]

Generally, it seems like "racism is a pandemic" is about understanding racism as a phenomenon that impacts everyone everywhere, and as something that everyone needs to address. It's another way of trying to explain how racism is not simply an individual attitude or prejudice. This is useful, to be sure. But it also obscures other truths about racism that must be contended with. "The effects of the evil of racism," Schlissel says in his email, "are universal. We cannot ignore this reality […] we won't tolerate any form of racism or vile acts that end the lives of our fellow human beings." By turning racism into another pandemic, in which racism is

[41] This is a transcript of an image of black handwritten text on a white background, posted on Instagram by @kjopson with the caption "Thanks @theatredirector for posting a man holding a sign that said this. I wrote it out and posted it on my wall to remind me to keep working at it, even when all the attention has passed. #endwhitesilence #racismkills."

[42] This is an example of figurative access, which I discuss at length in "The Question of Figurative Access."

[43] I'm mindful of Amy Vidali's important critique of Lakoff and Johnson, that their developmental argument about metaphor acquisition is ableist in its implication that disabled people are generally less capable of using metaphor than nondisabled people.

reduced to the "vile acts" of "evil" people, Schlissel invites us to ignore how the institutional history of UM is characterized by ongoing efforts to undermine racial justice by administrators who believed that their intentions were good (Johnson, *Undermining Racial Justice*).

Tropes that can thus create access and enable some kinds of movement can also, at the same time, block access in other ways. Lakoff and Johnson explain how metaphors work by "highlighting" certain aspects of a concept while "hiding" others. The metaphor "racism is a pandemic" may highlight some forms of individual action that are accountable to collective needs. This is useful because the culture of white supremacy elevates individualistic thinking and deplores collective thinking, and people in this culture struggle with moving beyond an individualistic frame.[44] But the metaphor "racism is a pandemic" also obscures the fact that institutional racism produces disproportionate rates of the pandemic's impact on BIPOC communities; as Martin Shuster, a philosopher specializing in genocide studies, suggests, "while the virus driving this pandemic is new, the conditions that make it a lethal pandemic are not. Instead of focusing on the virus, focus for a moment instead on the institutions and practices within which the victims of COVID-19 are embedded" (n.p.). It could be said that the short (meme-length) forms of the argument "Racism is a pandemic, too," or "Racism is a Virus," or "Treat racism like Covid-19" do the opposite—they focus on the virus instead of the institutions and practices of racism as a deeply embedded structure of power that is older than, and foundational to, the U.S. itself. In this way, while in some ways giving people an orientation to antiracist action and enabling us to do things about it, "racism is a pandemic" can also be a barrier to our reflection on our own investments and complicities in the structure of racism.

[44] Access, for example, DiAngelo; Okun; Frankenberg.

Using the metaphor "racism is a pandemic" may help people *ignore* persuasive arguments that we are still shareholders in racism; it creates access to a state of ignorance regarding white complicity (Applebaum).[45]

Methodology of Tropes and Methods of Troping

What are tropes, and how can we use them as resources for anti-oppressive meaning-making in scholarship and other movement practices? This critical methodology pursues tropes to understand certain aspects of how meanings are made, taken up, and circulated within social and cultural relations. A trope might be a metaphor, a figure, a rhetorical device; I'll discuss definitions in detail in the next section. I read and study scholarly work on tropes and figures as key resources of meaning-making, and I identify some critical methods of *troping*, or intentional ways of exploiting the functions of tropes to facilitate analysis, inquiry, and action upon social and cultural discourses. I'm doing this work not only for how it enables me to develop the other theories in this project but to offer this methodology and these methods as a model and a resource for those practitioners of anti-oppressive teaching and learning among my readers, for whom tropes and troping are a compelling dimension of their work.

In this essay, I read a variety of tropological scholarship to consider how tropes operate by changing things, changing meanings, changing perspectives, changing associations. A trope

[45] This is a key function of figurative access that I want to examine in future work: how tropes as access devices can contribute to what critical race theorist Charles W. Mills calls an epistemology of ignorance (*The Racial Contract*). I call this function *rhetorical ignorance*. I am especially interested in how popular pedagogical devices for thinking about whiteness, such as the "invisible knapsack of white privilege" (McIntosh) and "white fragility" (DiAngelo), attempt to deal with this.

can involve turning one thing into something else.[46] Tropes make meaning by leveraging qualities of similarity and difference within multiple meaningful entities. Conceiving tropes in terms of change allows us to think about what it might mean to work with tropes in the transformative practice of *shaping change* that adrienne maree brown describes in *Emergent Strategy*. Presupposing that change is a constant and ever-present force in our lives, "shaping change" describes an approach to transformative movement work that proceeds in an adaptive, nonlinear fashion to act in values-based relationship to inevitable change. Such study as mine is needed to better equip us to wage anti-oppressive struggles in the domain of meaning-making. The stakes of this struggle, which brown describes as an "imagination battle," are very high: "Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown and Renisha McBride and so many others are dead because, in some white imagination, they were dangerous. And that imagination is so respected that those who kill, based on an imagined, racialized fear of Black people, are rarely held accountable" (18). What brown describes as the workings of imagination here are the kind of transformations of meaning that my methodology of tropes is concerned with:

> Imagination has people thinking they can go from being poor to a millionaire as part of a shared American dream. Imagination turns Brown bombers into terrorists and white bombers into mentally ill victims. Imagination gives us borders, gives us superiority, gives us race as an indicator of capability. I often feel I am trapped inside someone else's imagination, and I must engage my own imagination in order to break free. (18)

[46] My dissertation title's reference to "transfiguration" is meant to evoke this sense of how troping turns things into other things. My knowledge of this sense of transfiguration comes from the *Harry Potter* universe, whose author, she who must not be named, was getting new attention as I drafted this essay, as she came out very publicly as a TERF (trans-exclusionary radical feminist), much to my and many other fans' extreme disappointment. As quoted by *Vulture*, "one critic told her, 'You are Voldemort.'" She may be "canceled" for such fans, but Harry Potter is not: trans activist Riley J. Dennis tweeted, "my favorite fun fact about the Harry Potter series is that it actually does not have an author. like we just have no clue who wrote those books. and I think that's beautiful."

Where she uses the term "imagination" we could substitute "rhetorics," "meaning-making," or "troping." The methodology of tropes and troping is similarly about finding ways to engage those same tools of meaning-making toward creating different realities.

This essay models a methodological reflection on working with tropes as a way of doing transformative or anti-oppressive rhetorical scholarship. What do we think we're doing, when we use tropes for transformative scholarship practices that engage in terrains of meaning-making—and how are we doing it?[47] In "Methodology of Practice," I discuss transformative scholarship about meaning-making (or transformative rhetorical theory) at some length. For my purposes, such scholarship involves two kinds of tasks: *critiques of meaning-making* and *reshaping meanings*. Critiques of meaning-making means questioning and analyzing stories, ideas, knowledge, and how they emerge and circulate—in extant, historical, or ongoing social and cultural processes, practices, texts, and systems. Reshaping meanings is about creating new ideas, new stories, new knowledge that specifically shift relations of power to increasingly cultivate ways of being-in-relation that reflect anti-oppressive values. The distinction between these tasks is merely heuristic for the purpose of presenting a theory in this writing; in practice, the tasks of critiquing and reshaping meanings are always intertwined.

This is a recursive, reflexive study—always turning back on itself—because a methodology of tropes requires approaching tropes as an object of theory (I am making a theory of tropes here) and at the same time recognizing that tropes themselves *are* theory or contain theories about that which they represent. To have a "theory of tropes" can mean articulating ideas about how tropes work, or about the potential and possible uses or effects of

[47] I'm referencing Ann Berthoff's simple definition of method as "what we think we are doing and how we are doing it" (*The Making of Meaning*, 19), which I also discuss (and critique) in "Methodology of Practice."

tropes. What can we do with tropes? Or: what do tropes do? How do they function? What patterns can we observe in the working of tropes? What do those patterns tell us about meaning-making? In my essay "The Question of Figurative Access," I make the theoretical claim that tropes create access, or tropes affect access in significant ways that are worth paying attention to in work concerning access and accessibility. In other words, figurative access is a "theory of tropes" in the sense that it encourages a particular understanding of "what tropes do" in terms of affecting access.

To work with "tropes as theory" means recognizing how tropes circulate knowledge or constitute ways of thinking or knowing; tropes can help one make explanations (or can furnish explanations) of complex things. Tropes can function as concepts, complex sets of ideas reduced into shorthand analogies, images, or figures. Tropes as theory can operate thus on very large scales, such as Hayden White's theory that the development of consciousness is "tropological in nature" and its history follows the sequence of four master tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synechdoche, irony).[48] Tropes also function as concepts in more locally practical ways. For example, "scaffolding" is a trope (a metaphor) that teachers use to communicate, with other teachers and with students, a particular theory of "learning as building": that in order to learn something complex, you must first learn something less complex, and then "build on" that, toward the more-complex thing. My rhetorical framework of journal-keeping is an

[48] "Understanding is a process of rendering the unfamiliar...familiar; of removing it from the domain of things felt to be 'exotic' and unclassified into one or another domain of experience encoded adequately enough to be felt to be humanly useful, nonthreatening, or simply known by association. This process of understanding can only be tropological in nature [...] this process of understanding proceeds by the exploitation of the principal modalities of figuration [or] the 'master tropes'...of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony" (White 5).

example of this: I use “practice tropes” to make explanations of journal-keeping pedagogy that will help potential practitioners use journal-keeping as a teaching/learning (scholarly) resource.

Terminology: Tropes, Troping, Tropology

The methodology of tropes needs an understanding of “trope” as an index of “something” that we can give our attention to. We can develop this understanding by looking in scholarship about tropes for answers to the question “what *is* a trope?” Then we can think about what tropes do, or what we do with tropes, or what “troping” entails. Troping, as an index of an activity or process, refers at times to intentional practices with or about tropes, involving a practitioner’s agency; and at others to processes and relations of meaning that tropes bring about, regardless of intention. Finally, we can use two senses of “tropology” to refer to a particular collection of tropes (“a tropology”) or to a more abstract field of study (the domain of “tropologists”). Each of these terms is useful, in multiple senses, because—even though this multiplicity can pose some difficulties, requiring careful, ongoing disambiguation—it gives us a robustly adaptable vocabulary for opening critical attention to the many ways that tropes move and shape meanings.

Trope(s)

“Trope” is often used by rhetoricians and others who study language to mean a “figure of speech,” or a use of language that diverges from an expected or conventional meaning, in order to achieve a particular rhetorical effect. Such definitions often foreground the creative agency of the one who “uses” a trope and emphasize the movement of meaning from

"ordinary" usage to alternative registers. Gideon Burton, for example, defines "trope" as "an artful deviation from the ordinary or principal signification of a word" (n.p.).

"A trope" can be a categorical term referring to certain "modalities of figuration" (White 5), as in "metaphor is a trope"; or it can refer to instances of figures themselves—like *a* metaphor, or this or that metaphor. I use the word "trope" as a flexible umbrella term; its meanings for me overlap with terms like "figure," "concept," "type." Holding a multiplicity of senses is useful and can be managed in the context of dialogic, reflexive practice. That is, I consider the question of disambiguating between these and other trope-terms (e.g., what's the difference between metonymy and synecdoche?) to be useful pedagogical exercises, valuable as questions to be engaged with in a dialogic and reflexive way, rather than as questions that need definitive answers. In short, "trope" is most valuable for transformative scholarship from the perspective of practice. And, in this practice, users can work out a shared understanding of what "tropes" are as it serves their purposes.

An important model of this community-based dialogic flexibility, and a source I have found particularly helpful for thinking about the methodology of tropes, is the website *TV Tropes.org*.[49] *TV Tropes* is "a wiki documenting, in a fairly informal manner, the various conventions of fiction."[50] The site's Glossary page claims that theirs is "not the actual literary definition of a trope, and should not be confused with it. This is just an informal definition we

[49] *TV Tropes* is a wiki and therefore subject to constant revision. That said, for each reference to *TV Tropes* in this essay, I will provide the page title and URL in footnotes here rather than in my bibliography, where I have listed only the main website.

[50] "Wiki / TVTropes aka: This Very Wiki." tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Wiki/TVTropes?from=Wiki.ThisVeryWiki

use for this site."[51] "Tropes are tools," according to *TV Tropes*: "the means by which a story is told by anyone who has a story to tell. We collect them, for the fun involved."[52] The project originated in a discussion on a fan forum for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as contributors began compiling some of the ways the show played with various pop-culture motifs. It has since grown into a vast archive of commentary on numerous TV shows, movies, books, comics, and video games. For *TV Tropes*' purposes, a trope is "a storytelling shorthand for a concept that the audience will recognize and understand instantly. Above all, a trope is a convention. It can be a plot trick, a setup, a narrative structure, a character type, a linguistic idiom... you know it when you see it."[53] *TV Tropes* represents the scholarly labor of a community of readers brought together by a shared pleasure in engaging with media in a playfully analytical way. It is not "academic" scholarship, yet it is the result of a huge amount of research, study, and peer review of a different kind.

Troping

"Troping" has several senses that are all useful for this methodology. First, there is an intentional rhetorical activity of troping, as a gerund suggestive of the verb "to trope." For *TV Tropes*, "troping" refers to "the act of discovering and documenting tropes in media. It's a neologism that we created and we're very proud of it."[54] Practitioners of this troping, or "anyone who contributes to [*TV Tropes*]," are called "Tropers." In this sense of troping, tropes

[51] "TV Tropes Glossary." tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Administrivia/TVTropesGlossary

[52] "Tropes." tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Tropes

[53] "Trope." tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Trope

[54] "TV Tropes Glossary." tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Administrivia/TVTropesGlossary

are the object of an analytical engagement, not (as the rhetoricians have it) the vehicle of an artful linguistic deviation. *TV Tropes* reflects this distinction as it refers to the act of invoking a trope in the process of storytelling as "playing" or "playing with" a trope.

Another way to use the term "troping" is to refer to the condition of the relatedness of meanings, regardless of the intentions of rhetors. Hayden White uses the word thus to describe the meaning-relationships that are at stake in any instance of tropes or tropological figuration. For White, tropes work by establishing associations "between concepts normally felt not to be related or to be related in ways different from that suggested in the trope used" (2). "Thus considered," White continues, "troping is both a movement *from* one notion of the way things are related *to* another notion, and a connection between things so that they can be expressed in a language that takes account of the possibility of their being expressed otherwise" (2, emphasis in original). Here, troping is both "a movement" and "a connection." As a movement, troping could be the intentional act of using a trope (what *TV Tropes* calls "playing" a trope). As "a connection between things," troping can refer to a given or received pattern of the relatedness of meanings as a precondition to any intentional rhetorical act. This connectivity is important as it underscores how tropes, even considered in particular instances, are an entry point to critical engagement at larger scales with processes and systems of meaning-making.

Tropology

Tropology, as a noncount noun, signifies a minor field or discipline of academic rhetorical studies, concerning the study of tropes.[55] *A tropology*, as a count noun, refers to a

[55] As an academic project, tropology looks very different in different periods. Medieval tropologists were mainly concerned with biblical interpretation about how metaphors and other figures construct moral lessons

collection of tropes that are unified by a particular theory of how they make meaning in the domain where they circulate. Many "tropologists" (as academic scholars in the field call themselves) or "tropers" (as the contributors to *TV Tropes* call themselves) are interested in understanding tropes and the relations between them in comprehensive and systematic ways. Tropologist James Mellard asserts that "tropologies" are "not mere lists, but theories about the number and arrangement of tropes" that "provide philosophical reasons for limiting the number and order of primary rhetorical figures" (1). The tropers of *TV Tropes*, on the other hand, are not concerned with limiting the number or determining the order of the tropes archived on the wiki site (nor do they use the term "tropology" much), but they do strive to draw very clear distinctions between the different tropes they document, and to define the relationships between those tropes (such as "super-trope" and "subtrope," "sister tropes," and the different ways a trope can be "played"—"straight," "inverted," "subverted," etc.). I find "tropology" a useful term for referring to a particular collection of tropes and for referring to the practice of thinking about how particular tropes are related to each other.[56]

My essay "A Constellation of Practice-Tropes for Journal-Keeping Pedagogy" is a tropology, for example. It collects eight practice-tropes, each representing particular kinds of practices that I consider important to journal-keeping pedagogy. The tropes constitute *a*

(McDermott). In the late 20th century, tropologists were interested in using tropes to theorize secular discourse more generally (Mellard).

[56] Each of the following could be considered as a tropology: Kenneth Burke's "four master tropes"; the website TVTropes.org, a fandom wiki about storytelling conventions in popular culture; Jay Dolmage's "disability myths" and "disability rhetorics" (*Disability Rhetoric*); Gideon Burton's *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*, a reference website about classical rhetorics; Bruce Horner's *Terms of Work for Composition*; Sara Ahmed's "problem students" (complaining student, over-sensitive student, etc--from "Against Students," a post on *FeministKilljoys.com*; Patricia Hill Collins's "controlling images" of Black women: mammy, matriarch, welfare mother, Black lady, jezebel *(Black Feminist Thought*); Jungian archetypes; Tarots; astrologies; personality types; Hogwarts houses.

tropology because they work collectively in a systematic way. All eight tropes and the practices they represent are equally relevant to journal-keeping pedagogy as I understand it. But this is not a "final" number, and they don't have a specific order. There might be more tropes than these; there have been tropes I once considered part of the framework but no longer mention as part of it. I'm not interested in establishing a definitive number of tropes or a deterministic ordering of them. This is how I think of tropology: relations between tropes are rhetorically and philosophically significant within contexts, always open to question and change, not to be settled or fixed.

Studying Tropes to Expose Power: Beyond Critical Discourse Analysis

For my purposes, the methodology of tropes is oriented toward creating greater insight into how power circulates in meaning-making. My understanding of this methodology thus borrows a great deal from practices of Critical Discourse Analysis or Critical Discourse Studies (CDA/CDS), a large and varied network of academic fields among the Humanities and Social Sciences.[57] Most of these scholars position their work in activist terms, as studying and exposing how power operates in discourse in order to challenge unjust social hierarchies. They understand that "[p]ower is central for understanding the dynamics and specifics of control (of action) in modern societies"; but because power "remains mostly invisible," these scholars use various methods to analyze "linguistic manifestations" and other forms of discourse (media, communications, rhetorics, etc.) to expose how power operates (Wodak and Meyer 12). In

[57] CDA scholars have argued that it "isn't a method but an approach" (Meyer). To avoid this confusion, CDS has more recently become the preferred term by scholars of these fields, but I often use "CDA" because I'm talking about the activity/practice rather than a field of "studies."

other words, analyzing "language" or any form of communication is potentially a way to gain critical access to power. I don't mean access in the sense of "having (more) power," being "in power," or "empowerment" necessarily. I mean revealing or exposing power's operations in meaning-making practices, with the aim of enabling interventions or intentional shifts in those practices to disrupt and eliminate the harmful effects of power. Analysis of discourse (or rhetorics, or meaning-making systems) creates access to shaping change at the points where power operates in discourse. In CDA, which generally uses a Foucauldian understanding of power, "discourse is widely regarded as a manifestation of social action which is determined by social structure and simultaneously reinforces or erodes structure" (Wodak and Meyer 11). Whether it "reinforces or erodes" structure, the actions (uses of language, rhetorical or meaning-making practices) that constitute discourse do something to structure to create a difference, a change. Change is always happening; to practice analysis or critique of meaning-making, to question "reality," or to ask why and how things are the way they are: these are necessary to increase our ability to shape change toward our aims and values.

I appreciate CDA's broad understanding of "discourse," as what is subjected to critical analysis. As I discuss in "Methodology of Practice," transformative rhetorical theory, particularly Cultural Rhetorics, points to manifestations of discourse not just in circumscribed frames of speech, language, or written communication; rather, we can examine all kinds of performances, activities, and artifacts that are meaningful within social and cultural relations, with attention to how they circulate power. The close relationship between "discourse" and "rhetoric" is reflected in Jay Dolmage's definition of rhetoric as the study of both the circulation of power

through communication *and* the circulation of discourse through the body.[58] Throughout this project, I toggle between *discourse*, *rhetorics*, and *meaning-making* as different names for the circulations of power through embodied communication practices, because each term invokes useful concepts, and each circulates in various contexts that are relevant to my work.

CDA scholarship also provides many models for apprehending the complexity of discourse, which is understood as never simply a static object but always an ongoing accumulation of activities and practices, including the activity of analysis. CDA attends to this complexity in a systematic way: "The systematicity of CDA keeps analysis close to the linguistic data under analysis, looking for patterns at the stylistic, verbal, syntactic, and figurative structure and considering the ways in which such discursive and semiotic structures circulate or articulate with ideology" (Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon, 118). In simple terms, CDA pays close attention to the relationships between textual details and contextual factors. Thomas Huckin for example differentiates among "levels" to guide students' analysis, from the "word level" to "text level" and on up through "higher levels" (places, systems, institutions, and so on). Ellen Barton's approach to text/context analysis focuses on what she calls "rich features—linguistic features that point to the relation between a text and its context. Rich features have both linguistic integrity (i.e., they can be defined, categorized, coded, and counted) and contextual value (i.e., they can be connected to matters of meaning and significance), so rich features are therefore amenable to the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis that characterizes discourse analysis research" (23). Barton's description of "rich features" has been important to my thinking about tropes as the focus of analysis. And CDA scholars are

[58] *Academic Ableism*, 8. I discuss Dolmage's definition of rhetoric at length in "Methodology of Practice," and I also consider his work on metaphors in "The Question of Figurative Access."

mindful of how analysis affects meaning: James Paul Gee for instance addresses a "frame problem" of text/context analysis, where the frame of reference can be continually expanded, but as the frame expands the potential meanings also change. Because the activity of analysis itself impacts the meanings of discourse, analysis procedures must account for this recursiveness. This dynamic mirrors the Cultural Rhetorics understanding of "rhetorics" as referring to the study of systems of meaning-making practice, and also referring to the practices themselves as they are shaped by and participate in power relations.

I thus borrow a great deal from CDA, but this paradigm also has limitations for anti-oppressive work. First, while a lot of this scholarship alludes to the need to address the position of the researcher as a necessary part of analysis, too often authors don't pursue this necessity very far beyond acknowledging it. Wodak and Meyer summarize the project of CDA for an unmarked subject category of scholars; they don't name any specific marginalized populations as beneficiaries, for all their emphasis on how "CDS scholars play an advocatory role for socially discriminated groups" (18). In a list of social "challenges" that become research agendas for CDA/CDS, Wodak and Meyer mention neoliberalism, globalization, climate change, impacts of digital communication, and identity politics—but again, no mention of particular systems of oppression like racism, ableism, or colonization or the specific peoples who are most impacted by those systems. Certain scholars offer exceptions, of course, such as Margaret Price who uses CDA methods in *Mad at School* to examine how higher education constructs and excludes people with mental disabilities. Transformative rhetorical theories—disability, critical race, decolonial, queer and feminist rhetorics—help to foreground the needs of particular

populations with their emphasis on always situating scholarship in very local and specific cultural contexts, as I discuss in "Methodology of Practice."

Finally, another problem with CDA is that it isn't a very accessible body of work, given its academic language conventions and citation practices. In this essay I'm meditating on the question of how to cultivate more accessible analytic practices that anyone can use to understand and shift relations of power in their own situations, and I am investigating tropes as a resource for this effort.[59] Wodak and Meyer foreground the utility of examining tropes for the project of CDA, which seeks to expose "hidden and latent" ideologies that circulate as "everyday beliefs, which often appear disguised as *conceptual metaphors and analogies*…. In everyday discussions, certain ideas emerge more commonly than others" (8, emphasis added). These authors are talking about tropes here. A methodology of tropes, a meditation on tropological methods, allows us to cultivate a robust vocabulary for unpacking complex meaning-making processes and the currents of power bound up in them. For me, "tropological" also refers to the logics of similarity and resonance, as a trope always combines elements of similarity with elements of difference. And from the etymology of trope in the Greek "tropos" meaning "turn," the turn of a trope can be a swerve, a change of direction in a path of movement, or it can be a transformation, a turning from one thing to something else, a "transfiguration." By developing a critical understanding of tropes, we thus enable ourselves to shape these changes.

[59] I have been thinking about tropes in this way since my teaching assistantship with Remi Yergeau in an upper-level English course on Cultural Rhetorics (as I describe in this dissertation's Introduction), where students studied Kenneth Burke's treatment of "Four Master Tropes" (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony) as a set of tools for making their own analyses of discourse.

A Troping Methods Toolkit

Scholars who study tropes in a wide variety of academic and non-academic contexts demonstrate an array of critical methods of troping. I am gathering some of these methods here. This is an emerging toolkit… and an opportunity to dive a little deeper into the work of exemplary tropers including Kenneth Burke, the *TV Tropes* community, and Sara Ahmed. I describe four such methods here: collecting tropes, tropes as heuristics, following tropes around, and troping as revealing options.

Collecting tropes

Collecting tropes might require pointing them out (is *this* a trope? *that's* a trope!), identifying and describing them, perhaps cataloging them; it is at least gathering a number of related tropes together. *TV Tropes* is the best example here. Collecting tropes is fun; pleasure is a good reason to collect tropes. Sara Ahmed collects tropes (she calls them "figures"; more on her work shortly). Jay Dolmage collects tropes: "spatial metaphors" (*Academic Ableism*), "disability myths and rhetorics" (*Disability Rhetoric*). I collect tropes; I have many growing collections. I opened this essay by describing my collection of "Racism is a Pandemic" tropes; my essay on Journal-Keeping presents my collection of journal-keeping practice-tropes.[60] A collection of tropes might be a tropology. Collecting tropes is a useful method for gathering data about patterns of meaning-making in a particular context.

[60] I have other collections as well, which I haven't been able to include in this project but hope to keep working with in future scholarship: these include "rhetoric is water" tropes; antiracist teaching tools about whiteness (as mentioned in footnote 7 above), and "composition as architecture" tropes.

Using tropes as "heuristics," or tools for making sense of things
(Troper: Kenneth Burke)

As heuristic devices, or tools for making sense of things or "figuring things out," tropes can be used for narrative, explanatory, and investigative purposes, for making analytic renderings and clarifications regarding one's lived circumstances, limitations and ways to move. They can expose subtle or hidden relations of power, to inform critical, tactical, or pedagogical actions that alter the meaning-relations at hand. Kenneth Burke's explanation of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony in "Four Master Tropes" is my primary reference point for this understanding of tropes. Most useful is Burke's description of a way of intentionally shaping the functions of tropes that he calls "deliberate coaching and criticism" (422).

Burke's concern is how tropes function in "the discovery and description of 'the truth'" (421). I read his phrase "the truth" not in any absolute philosophical sense but rather as a useful shorthand (as suggested by his use of scare quotes, here and elsewhere) for a way of making sense of things as true or real. In other words, he's not actually talking about "truth" so much as he's talking about meaning, which is relative and relationally constructed. This is also clear in his use of a distinction between "poetic realism" and "scientific realism" (421, 422), marking both phrases too with quotation marks. For Burke, these are distinct discourses or rhetorical registers that offer differently functional ways of apprehending some common ground of lived experience (as one kind of "realism" or another).[61]

[61] While he says that the poetic is an "older" realism compared to the "modern" scientific, Burke doesn't judge one as better or "more real" than another. Instead, his aim is to describe these relative discursive functions as specific rhetorical processes with particular affordances and limitations: or, as operations of meaning-making that people use to generate, navigate, or contest and change various possible shared realities.

The heuristic use of tropes, or what Burke also calls "deliberate coaching and criticism" of tropes, relies on understanding how they establish meaning relationships between different "characters," meaning "whatever can be thought of as distinct (any thing, pattern, situation, structure, nature, person, object, act, role, process, event, etc.)" (422). For metaphor, the relationship is one of perspective: a metaphor creates meaning by understanding one character "from the perspective" of another. In other words, I use my understanding of one "character" (A) as a vantage point to make new sense of another "character" (B). In the "racism is a pandemic" metaphor, we use our sense of "pandemic" (Character A) to understand "racism" (Character B). In the scaffolding metaphor mentioned earlier, I make sense of "teaching students how to write an argumentative essay" (Character B) from the perspective of "how one can create simple, temporary supportive structures to help build something bigger and more complex" (Character A). In the "perspective process" that is metaphor, Burke suggests, "characters can be considered tentatively, in terms of other characters, for experimental or heuristic purposes" (422). This is what we're doing when we use metaphors to explain something difficult: we invite someone to tentatively consider a hard-to-understand thing in terms of something they already have some understanding of, even if that understanding is limited, partial, or even fictitious. My understanding of scaffolds, for instance, does not in any way come from actual experience of construction work, yet the metaphor helps me get a

---

The idea that there are multiple functional ways in which we create shared meanings to make sense of our collective experiences) is important for critique because what and how we make sense of what is "real" is a significant area of political struggle. Different "realisms" *are* often judged and critiqued as being supportive of particular hegemonic power relations. Social-turn and posthumanist comp scholars are critical of what they perceive as the bourgeois "sentimental realism" of expressivist pedagogies; introduction to Cardenas's *The Transreal* is a critique of "speculative realism" as a provenance of white cis men. Multiple "realisms" can also be used critically in creative ways: Tobin Siebers argues for a "new realism of the body"; Cardenas offers her concept of a "transreal."

handle on some aspects of teaching because I have a sufficient concept of what a scaffold is and does.[62]

Victor Villanueva offers an instructive example of "coaching" tropes to make sense of systemic power—specifically, racism—in his essay "Blind: Talking About the New Racism." Villanueva uses Burke's theory of master tropes to expose the rhetoric of "colorblindness" that Eduardo Bonilla-Silva identifies with the "new racism." Villanueva argues that the "new racism" is justified not through pseudoscience and eugenics as in past centuries, but through everyday rhetoric, which the author analyzes using Burke's theory of four master tropes (metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, irony). The piece includes many examples for analysis from wide range of media and contexts: anecdotes from the author's experience as a writing teacher and encounters with his children's teachers; current events (Katrina, Guantanamo, 2005 London bombings); qualitative studies, poems, and other personal reflections.

Following tropes around with Sara Ahmed: a troping method to expose the workings of systemic power

[62] Burke gives examples of how such "coaching" applies to the other master tropes as well. Synecdoche entails a relation which Burke describes as "representation," where one character stands as representative for another of which is it a part. This representational connection is reversible, so that while a part can represent a whole, an image of a whole can also represent one of its parts. For example we might refer to a car as "wheels" (using a part of the car to represent the car), and we also might say "my car is broken" when it's actually just a part of the car that is broken (using the whole "car" to represent the broken part). Both of these are synecdoche according to Burke's definition. Burke suggests we can "'coach' the concept of the synecdochic by extending it to cover such relations (and their reversals) as: before for after, implicit for explicit, temporal sequence for logical sequence, name for narrative, disease for cure, hero for villain, active for passive" (428).

The troping method of following tropes around is exemplified in Sara Ahmed's critical practice of "following around" particular words and figures to gain insight into the systemic operations of power at various scales: from the heteronormative family to the university.[63] This "following around" is an interrogative practice that presumes a movement of meanings and seeks to understand and perhaps reshape those movements toward different ends. Ahmed explains this practice as it applies to "words":

> I think of feminism as poetry; we hear histories in words; we reassemble histories by putting them into words. This book still follows words around just as I have done before, turning a word this way and that, like an object that catches a different light every time it is turned; attending to the same words across different contexts, allowing them to create ripples or new patterns like texture on a ground. I make arguments by listening for resonances; the book thus involves repeating words, sometimes over and over again; words like *shatter*, words like *snap*. The repetition is the scene of a feminist instruction. (*Living* 12)

For Ahmed, "figures" are rhetorical constructions used to characterize certain people as subject to certain patterns of social judgment. The "feminist killjoy," for example, is a figure of one who makes feminist arguments, that characterizes such a person as merely unhappy and wanting to spread their unhappiness to others. In short, it is a figure for containing and dismissing feminist points of view. Following such figures is a way of examining how they produce discursive formations that uphold relations of power.

In one example, her 2015 essay "Against Students" addressing the contentious debate over the practice of "trigger warnings" and other related issues in higher education, Ahmed analyzes a conservative rhetoric that characterizes certain so-called "problem" students as

[63] Ahmed's critiques of family and university (among other structures) are threads through many of her books of the last decade. *The Pursuit of Happiness* (2010) in particular gives extended attention to family structures; *On Being Included* (2012), *What's the Use?* (2019), and *Complaint!* (2021) all dwell on universities. Both themes are present in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) which is the main text I consider here.

posing “a threat to education, to free speech, to civilization, even to life itself.” This rhetoric operates through “a constellation of related figures: the consuming student, the censoring student, the over-sensitive student, and the complaining student.” Ahmed argues that these figures are invoked by some university stakeholders to dismiss protests of institutionalized violence and oppressive status quos. For example: by making students dismissible as “complaining students,” she argues, “harassment can be justified as an expression of academic freedom.” Ahmed’s troping critique not only exposes this conservative rhetoric but offers a creative rereading of the figure, that reshapes its meaning into something useful for anti-oppressive purposes: “My own sense is that our feminist political hopes rest with over-sensitive students. Over-sensitive can be translated as: Sensitive to that which is not over” (Ahmed, “Against,” n.p.). What she calls a “translation” could also be thought of as a (re)transfiguration: rather than presenting a barrier to purported scholarly movements (as “academic freedom”), such students become sources of insight about systemic harms that are still happening (“that which is not over”).

Ahmed’s readings of the “figure of the feminist killjoy” demonstrate how troping not only exposes the workings of a dominant and oppressive structure of meaning-making (like the heteronormative family) but also offers opportunities, if ambivalent ones, for reshaping the movement of meanings within that sphere. Like the constellation of “problem student” figures, Ahmed defines this one as a trope that originates in antifeminist sentiment and becomes a strategy of not listening to feminist arguments: “[W]hen you name something as sexist or racist you are making that thing more tangible so that it can be more easily communicated to others. But for those who do not have a sense of the racism or sexism you are talking about, to bring

them up is to bring them into existence" (37). "You" then become a killjoy because it isn't the thing you're talking about, it's the fact that you are talking about it that is registered as a cause of unhappiness: "It is as if the point of making her point is to cause trouble, to get in the way of the happiness of others, because of her own unhappiness" (ibid).

Ahmed's project in *Living a Feminist Life* is "retooling [the femimist killjoy] for our own purpose" (37); to this end, she devises a "Killjoy Manifesto" and a "Killjoy Survival Kit" to encourage feminist readers to become killjoys, or to killjoy. It remains clear however that this is not a purely happy "reclaiming" of the killjoy but something more ambivalent: "you can killjoy not as a deliberate or intentional act; you might even be trying to participate in the joy of others. You can killjoy because you are not properly attuned to the requirements of a social system" (56). The figure captures how even while we use troping as a critical method to reshape meanings, the existing relations of meaning-making continue to designate meanings in ways that we can't control. Ahmed's further analysis of the killjoy figure showing how it emerges in a scene of her own family offers a keen demonstration of how tropes facilitate and maintain existing power relations. In this scene, her family sits around a table:

> my father at one end, myself at the other, my two sisters to one side, my mother to the other. Always we are seated this way, as if we are trying to secure more than our place. We are having polite conversations, where only certain things can be brought up. Someone says something you consider problematic. At first you try not to say anything. But they keep saying something. So maybe you respond, carefully, perhaps. (37)

Ahmed's shifting pronouns point out how the figure works as a rhetorical and persuasive device to establish and maintain certain relations around the table. Starting in first person, Ahmed grounds the figure in her own experience; shifting to the second person, she invites the reader to put themself in the scene (consistent with the "you" in the previous example). Then, the

pronoun shifts again: “however she speaks, the one who speaks as a feminist is usually heard as the cause of the argument” (37). The passive construction here (absenting the grammatical subject of “heard”) mirrors a “dynamic” Ahmed is trying to capture: the “killjoy” figure is an “assignment,” a role that is imposed on “the one who speaks as a feminist” by a ubiquitous and patriarchal authority. This assignment restricts movement of meanings by powerfully dictating how such speech will be heard (or more likely ignored).

In the next paragraph, as the killjoy becomes the main subject of the action, Ahmed completes her account of the “dynamic”:

> She stops the smooth flow of conversation. It becomes tense. She makes things tense. We can begin to witness what is being locked in this dynamic. The problem is not simply about the content of what she is saying. She is doing more than saying the wrong thing: she is getting in the way of something, the achievement or accomplishment of the family or of some *we* or another, which is created by what is not said. So much you are supposed not to say, to do, to be, in order to preserve that *we*. And yet, even if she is not supposed to react this way, her reaction is, at another level, willed. She is after all being wound up by someone who is winding her up. The family is performed by witnessing her being wound up, spinning around. Look, look at her spin! To make her the cause of a tension is another way of preserving the illusion that, without her, the family would be civil. I think those of us who have been killjoys around family tables probably know this; how useful we are as containers of incivility and discord. (Ahmed, *Living* 37-38)

I quote this section at some length because Ahmed’s careful articulation of how the killjoy figure works is an exemplary model of how attending to tropes can illuminate complex structured dynamics that generate and constrain the possibilities of meaning and action in very specific ways, here in ways that serve the dominant heteronormative family structure. The performance of family necessitates and thus calls forth a killjoy figure who can be “witnessed” as such. We could read this as an example of Burke’s “coached” synecdoche that includes

equivalences of "before for after" and "name for narrative": the killjoy fulfills her role in this "locked dynamic" even before she has reason to utter the speech that makes her a killjoy.

Considered another way, the feminist killjoy is a metonymy in Burke's sense of reduction, as the person so assigned is thus reduced to a "container of civility and discord" in service of a very particular rhetorical project, "the achievement or accomplishment of the family or of some *we* or another." For Burke, "The basic 'strategy' in metonymy is this: to convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible. E.g., to speak of 'the heart' rather than 'the emotions'" (424). The incorporeal or intangible state in this case is the maintenance of normative relations around the table, as conveyed to the "witnessing" family in terms of the tangible "killjoy" behaviors of the feminist speaker.[64] As quoted above, Ahmed locates a similar strategy serving what might be a specifically pedagogical function, in that "when you name something as sexist or racist you are making that thing more tangible so that it can be more easily communicated to others." As oppressive bodily discourses, sexism and racism are already tangible to the particular bodies they target, even if they are intangible or imperceptible to those who are consequently privileged by these systems. Metonymy thus becomes a tool for bringing insights from one circumscribed reality into another more generalized reality. At the same time it's a tool the inhabitants of the latter reality can use to diminish the truth of what the bringer says.

Troping with *TV Tropes*: options for creative and critical action in "Real Life" and beyond

[64] And as the basic strategy of *TV Tropes* is to render complex narrative patterns, across vast stretches of text "tangible" as the pithy, memorable phrases it uses to index tropes, Ahmed renders a complex power dynamic tangible in the pithy, memorable term "killjoy."

For our purposes, *TV Tropes* is useful in its simultaneous appeals both as a "critical" project that aims to archive and describe a rich catalog of pop-culture analysis; and as a "creative" resource for writers who can consult the site as a database of storytelling tools. This appeal to creative writers, implicit throughout the site, often presents a useful ambiguity in the way to think about the tropes under discussion. Particularly regarding tropes about character actions in fictional narratives, the ambiguity that arises has to do with who can be the subject of those actions: the character in the work of fiction, the author of the narrative, or its reader. Consider for example the entry for a trope called "Becoming the Mask":

> The Mole or the Con Man takes on a fake identity in order to gain something: information, money, a safe place, trust. As time progresses, he grows to love his new identity and the way people treat him. His new friends prove reliable and he is struck by the contrast. He might even fall in love with another person whom he is explicitly supposed to be taking advantage of. Either way, he wants to remain in his new identity forever.
>
> Options:
>
> - Make a Heel–Face Turn and become The Atoner and Sixth Ranger.
> - Go through with the con and say, "My God, What Have I Done?" when it's all over.[65]

In this account, "fake identity" becomes an ethical dilemma as the use of a disguise leads to shifting circumstances and new relations forged through the "fake identity" performance. The subsequent "Options" describe two common narrative alternatives (each identified as further sets of tropes, linked to the underlined phrases) that ensue from this dilemma. Each trope page includes a list of example texts that have been found by page contributors to utilize this trope. Among the examples listed for "Becoming the Mask" is James Cameron's film *Avatar*, in which

[65] "Becoming the Mask." tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BecomingTheMask

the disabled marine veteran Jake Sully, the main white-savior protagonist, offers a paradigmatic case that fulfills every point of the summary above. After initially taking on his Na'vi avatar to conduct espionage on behalf of his colonizing employers, he eventually "falls in love with the Na'vi people" they are exploiting. Choosing the first "Option," Jake "atones" by turning "heel-face" to lead the Na'vi in their resistance effort; at the end of the film, a Na'vi ritual enables him to "remain in his new identity forever" ("Becoming").

The ambiguity lies in how the actions of the character ("The Mole or the Con Man"; hereafter, the Mole) leading up to the dilemma are described in the third person, but the ensuing "Options" are articulated without an explicit grammatical person. This creates an ambiguity where these "options" can be read rhetorically in at least three ways: first, continuing in the descriptive mode of the preceding paragraph, the Mole is the implicit subject of the two alternative actions. In other words, the Mole could choose either to "make a Heel-Face Turn" or "go through with the con." Second, "Options" can be read reflexively as a storyteller's alternatives as she determines the next events of her unfolding narrative. That is, if I were writing a story about a Mole, as I develop the plot of my story, I might think about which of the options I want my character to choose. Taking this reflexive reading a step further, it is possible to read the implied grammatical subject of "Options" to be both the character ("the Mole") *and* the reader of the wiki page. In this reading, the actions listed become both descriptive and imperative; as if to suggest that, when you, a Mole, find yourself in a situation (as you may) of "Becoming the Mask," you may consider whether to "atone" or "go through with the con." (This "you" would resonate with the one Ahmed uses to impute the reader in her analysis of the killjoy.)

This latter reading is a playful one, to be sure; but the site's dominant modes of address often encourage such playful readerly identifications with and through the fictional characters and dramatic actions under discussion, which is part of what makes the site fun to read. Another useful example is the entry for a trope called "Real Life," which it describes as

> That dull, brown place you visit when you're not traversing time and space, questing to destroy a ring, slaying vampires, doing science, dressing like a flying mammal to fight a clown, or attaching balloons to your house to fly to South America.
>
> Best known for being the sole work in a completely different medium of its own, called "Reality".[66]

The underlined phrases (after the first[67]) are all hyperlinked references to other pages in the Wiki devoted to well-known fantasy narratives: respectively, *Dr. Who*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Portal* (a video game), *Batman*, and Pixar's *Up*. The second-person address, suggesting that you, the reader, are at times doing these fantastical things, implies a reflexive faculty on the part of a reader who can imaginatively inhabit these alternative worlds.[68] The specific proposition is that fantastical habitation (experiencing a "life" that isn't "real") occurs through consuming fantasy genre media, whereas "Real Life" is "Best known for being the sole work in a completely different medium of its own, called 'Reality.'" This tongue-in-cheek "definition" is implicitly acknowledging that Real Life is always a narrative construction. More than this, it's also suggesting that "Real Life" can only be understood as such by starkly contrasting it with so-called "alternate" realities, a notion that is challenged by the "visionary

---

[66] "Real Life." tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/RealLife

[67] "Dull, brown" is a link to the "Real Is Brown" trope page, which describes a trope in video games that use desaturated color palettes "for the sake of realism."

[68] Not that "doing science" is necessarily fantastical, but *Portal* is--which makes me think again of Burke's poetic and scientific realisms.

fiction" practices of Black feminist science fiction writers and readers, as I discuss in my Introduction and "Methodology of Practice" essays.

At the same time and in a more serious editorial mode, however, *TV Tropes* also marks an investment in maintaining a critical distinction between "Real Life" and the fictional world-making processes it catalogs. Certain entries across the site are tagged with the admonition "No Real Life Examples, Please!"[69] This editorial guidance for page contributors is intended to contain ambiguities in comparing historical events to their depictions in fictionalized texts, or such as arise when considering what is "real" from different perspectives. It is related to *TV Tropes*'s "Rule of Cautious Editing Judgment," which explains: "Wikis are open to editing from all sides, which makes them self-correcting. For the most part (trolls aside), people want to maintain a peaceful environment. This means that anything that rubs a little *too* harshly will be wiped away."[70] Thus, though its contributors may at times be informed by critiques of power, the site cannot produce them in a sustained way, perhaps because those critiques must be driven by specifically "transformative" agentic meaning-making purposes, whereas the Wiki structure tends toward a normative discourse ("maintain[ing] a peaceful environment").[71] For my purposes, *TV Tropes* is useful for its descriptive method, following associations of tropes across texts to demonstrate how tropes function in extensive, complex systems of meaning. In this regard it is a pedagogically useful resource that renders a complex analytic meta-discourse, thereby making it accessible to study.

---

[69] See for example "The Empire," tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheEmpire

[70] "Rule of Cautious Editing Judgment." tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Administrivia/RuleOfCautiousEditingJudgment

[71] See also "Ban on Politics." https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BanOnPolitics

In short, as informed by taking Burke's approach together with that of the *TV Tropes* hivemind, tropes become tools and materials of *meaning-making*, understood as an active rhetorical process that brings together "description and discovery of 'the truth'" with critical and creative modes of storying—telling stories and receiving stories, producing and consuming narrative media/texts—as thoroughly interwoven, reflexive, deeply situated in a multiplicity of contextual locations and layered dynamics, and shaped in relation to meaning-makers' embodied selves. These are tools we all use for meaning-making, whether or not we are aware of them as such. By learning to pay attention to how tropes mediate all our meaning-making activity, we can use them to gain a purchase on meaning-making that better suits our personal/political aims.

Chapter III.
Methodology of Practice

Both by listening to teachers and scholars on practice and meaning-making, and by practicing and reflecting on my own meaning-making practices, I am developing a clearer understanding of practice. My goal in this essay is to share something of this understanding with you, my readers. I want to distill some insights that can guide approaching "practice" and using this concept critically. This essay is intended for all participants in rhetorical scholarship, or in teaching and learning situations that deal with meaning-making, imagination, stories, ideology and communication as functions of social power.

A clear articulation of practice as a guiding concept for anti-oppressive rhetorical scholarship, or learning and teaching about meaning-making, is methodologically important for my work with figurative access and practice-tropes. In my methodological reflections on "practice" in this essay, and on "tropes" in "Methodology of Tropes," I seek to clarify two interdependent ways of understanding critical engagements with meaning-making. In other words, "practice" and "tropes" are both about ways of gaining critical awareness and insight into how meaning-making shapes the world.

This essay proceeds in a meditative fashion, weaving personal narrative reflection together with a literature review of academic rhetorical theory on systemic power and

transformation (rhetorics of antiracism, decolonization, and disability justice in particular) and with close readings of selected Black feminist and Buddhist texts that have recently illuminated my understanding of practice.

A story about getting back in the pool

I want to start with a story from my youth, to illustrate a basic sense of practice as a framework of personal reflection in relation to personal intentions.

In my junior year of high school, I joined the varsity swimming team because I loved to swim. The workouts we did in our team practices after school were difficult, and I quickly came to dread them each day. After the first week, I wrote in my journal: "swimming is tearing me apart… when I swim I feel like I'm drowning." Yet as I got stronger and more accustomed to the rhythm of breathing amid steady strokes, my dread was lessened each time I made it to the end of another practice. Then, two weeks before our first competition, I caught a respiratory virus that kept me out of school for several days. When I was well enough to return to school, I again dreaded the water and the relentless drills. I felt that the illness had swept all the new strength out of my lungs and muscles. I couldn't remember the feeling of steadiness in the rhythm of my breaths between strokes.

As that first day back at school ended and it was time for swimming again, I asked my coach for another day off practice to recover. I don't remember the words of his response. He affirmed that it would be hard to start again, and it wouldn't get any easier by not starting. He didn't minimize my fears or dismiss them; he didn't make me feel bad for wanting to go home. He encouraged me to use the time that remained until the first meet, still a few days away, to

rebuild strength, by getting back in the pool, with the hope that I could swim in the race. I decided to get back in the pool.

I begin with this narrative to highlight practice as a personal framework for critical reflection about our actions in relation to our purposes, about the meanings of our ways of doing and being, and about how we make meaning out of experience. I could use other examples; we could talk about practicing a musical instrument; or yoga, meditation, and other spiritual practices; or art practice, writing practice, creative practice. These are all examples I've used to talk with my students about practice. I dwell on my experience on the swimming team because my reflections on it, especially the interaction with my coach that I've described, have helped me write this dissertation. My telling might be a generous revision; given the conservative, patriarchal, sports-focused culture in which the scene took place, I'm sure my coach's arguments were more steeped in ableism than I describe. Focusing on the compassionately honest aspects of his advice is a rhetorical choice that allows me to make valuable use of my retelling in the present.

I've used "getting back in the pool" as a metaphor, a figurative access device, to help me keep returning to my writing, over and over in the face of all the delays and challenges that have made my doctoral work take so much longer than typically expected.[72] Emulating my swimming coach, I constantly give myself a pep talk: getting back in the writing, like getting back in the pool, is moving in the direction of your purpose. You're doing this work because, even if it's painful and frustrating, there is something you love about it and you care to see it

[72] As I describe in my Introduction, it has taken me almost ten years to finish this six-year program due to mental illness and other related challenges.

through. It will often be uncomfortable and hard, but you will be okay, and through this practice you will get somewhere new.

Getting back in the pool is hard. I had a teammate named Steve who, before the start of every single practice and meet, would stand at the edge of the pool deck and yell, "I HATE SWIMMING!" —right before he dove into the water to begin warming up. If asked why he did it, he would say, "Because it's true!" For a long time, I took his declaration at face value, and this made me wonder why he would be on the swimming team if he hated swimming so much. Now, I think he was using irony to make a subtler point about practice. Steve generally seemed to enjoy being part of the team; he was usually soft-spoken but always friendly and encouraging to newer team members like me. He was a good swimmer: his relay squad broke a school record. His practice of announcing that he hated swimming just before he swam was, I think, a way for him (and by proxy, many of us) to express the discomfort and frustration we often felt during our grueling practices, to hold space for it and find humor in it. I'm not saying that Steve intended or was even aware of this deeper meaning; he probably started doing it as a joke or to irritate our coach, but it may have become a ritual because on some embodied level it made it easier to get back in the pool.

Senses of Practice 1: Binary, Nonbinary

I could tell my own getting-back-in-the-pool story in a few different ways by adjusting how I'm using the word "practice." The version I've told goes: I started going to swimming practice; practice was hard at first but got easier, and then I got sick and had to miss practice; and then I recovered and returned to practice, in spite of new apprehensions about it. Practice

here refers to a recurring event (swim team practice) that enacts a commitment to a purpose or a cause (team competition). This event would happen whether I was present and participating in it, or absent and missing it; and either way it would constitute practice.

In a slightly different version, the story goes: I got into the practice of swimming, then I fell out of practice because I got sick; as I got better, I had to get back into practice so I could continue with the team. Here, practice uses a spatial metaphor (into, out of) to represent my engagement in an ongoing personal activity (my swimming) that is organized toward a purpose (my participation in competitions). The representation is binary, positive (in practice) or negative (out of practice) depending on whether I'm swimming regularly or not. This version is largely compatible with the first version: "being in or out of practice" is congruent with "attending or missing practices." Either of these narratives would have made sense to me and others in that place and time.

A third version has become available to me only recently, as my understanding of the senses of practice has developed through listening to Black feminists like adrienne maree brown and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, and dharma teachers including Thich Nhat Hanh and Lama Rod Owens. This version goes: I was practicing swimming; then I got sick, so I set aside my swimming practice and instead practiced resting; then there came a moment where I put aside rest and re-engaged in swimming practice. In this framing, both "swimming" and "rest" are practices. Unlike the previous, more binaristic versions, where "practice" only positively applies to swimming, and therefore resting is negated (as not-practicing), "practice" here gives a sense of value to both resting and swimming as options I could engage in. This nonbinary sense of practice would not have registered in my high school context; "more rest" was not as valued as

working harder, keeping up with the team, getting stronger and faster and more competitive.[73] My growing understanding of the third, more expansive sense of practice is partly what enables me to retell the story of my interaction with the coach in a way that thus makes it useful to me as a figurative access device for writing this dissertation. It also allows me to add, in the pep-talks I give myself about getting back to writing, that rest is always a valuable option. Similarly, when Steve yelled "I hate swimming" before practice, his stated reason for doing so was, more less, "just because." He wouldn't have called it a practice unto itself, but a merely flippant comment on swimming practice. I call it a practice because (according to my story of that time) it served a valuable purpose: it helped him and his teammates, including me, get through our workout.

Reorienting to Practice

The expansive, flexible, nonbinary sense of practice is the one I want to center in this essay, though the multitude of other senses continually show up, in sometimes troubling and sometimes useful ways. Any activity that people engage in could be represented, or conceptualized, as practice: practice is simply a conceptual lens for making sense of our activities, options, and intentions in relation to material circumstances (time, space, objects) and cultural systems of value. More specifically, practice is a critical concept, to be understood through active critique or asking questions about that which it represents. There is something

[73] The same coach also had us regularly listen to a sports psychologist's guided meditations, in which the psychologist told a story about an Olympic swimmer who supposedly lowered his own white cell count through "positive thinking," so that his appendicitis wouldn't prevent him from competing. I'd had appendicitis a few years earlier. I wanted to call bullshit on that. I didn't.

radical in thus decentering monolithic, exclusionary notions of "what counts" as practice. Following decolonial rhetorician Malea Powell, the point is to "*always* reframe 'the' way as *one* way, as a set of specific cultural values embodied in particular practices," to enable myself and others to recognize and interrogate "those value systems at work" (Powell 402).[74] In this sense, practice is a crucial methodological resource for anti-oppressive pedagogies.

In this exploration of the methodology of practice, as elsewhere in this dissertation, I'm guided by Ann Berthoff's simple definition of method as "a way of bringing together what we think we are doing and how we are doing it" (*The Making* 4). I love the simplicity of this definition and find it very useful as a device for reflecting on my own sense of method. Berthoff also describes method as "the nexus of theory and practice," and here I start to get uncomfortable. She is clearly influenced by Paulo Freire's theories of critical pedagogy and praxis (Freire's term for "the cycle of action and reflection that transforms the world") —she cites him often—yet she separates the structure of Freire's formulations from his revolutionary commitments to social justice, which she barely mentions. Her elision of the radical politics of this key source is evident in her use of the term "method" (instead of, say, "praxis") in an assertion like "when theory and practice are brought to bear on one another, the nexus is method"; she says, "method is philosophically complex" (19), reflecting her interests as abstracted in an academic scholarly mode, not engaged in the experiences and needs of people. This reading is corroborated by a comment Berthoff made in 1975 described the

[74] When we struggle and suffer in academia, sometimes we are told: "This is just how it works. This is just the way it is." A professor once said to me, regarding a working pace that was unrealistic for me given my anxiety and depression: "it's going to hurt--but if you want it, you can do it." This ableist advice only made me feel more ashamed when I couldn't maintain that pace.

antiracist work that led to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)'s statement on "Student's Right to Their Own Language" as "sham scholarship" because it failed to cite the white canon of literary theory that she held in high esteem ("In Response" 122).

My present aim is to meditate on "practice" as a focal, guiding concept for radical reflection about how individual actions and intentions relate to collective meaning-making processes, whether those processes contribute to systems of power and domination, or whether they work to shift and transform systems toward more just futures—or some combination of both. "Practice" provides a useful perspective on meaning-making because it rejects any separation of meaning or meaningfulness from the activity of practitioners, the agents or doers of practice.[75] Meaning isn't a substance that exists separate from the making of it; where there is meaning, there is always a subjective engagement, a practice. A critical, nonbinary concept of "practice" understands that makers, meanings, values, and contexts are all involved in a complex relationship of ongoing and iterative action. As adrienne maree brown puts it: "you're always practicing something. … You might be practicing what you want, you might be practicing what you don't want" (brown and Reagon). Starting with the recognition that "I'm always practicing something," there's an intentional shift, from passively drifting along in this unexamined reality, to a critical investigation: *what* am I practicing? What values are being served? What are *my* values? Where there is disconnect, where I want something different, how can I change my practices? These are questions that anyone can ask about their

[75] "People" doesn't strictly mean humans here; brown and Gumbs talk about plants and whales as having practices, as I'll discuss later. Also consider Indigenous views such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson who writes about deer populations as a "nation" of Indigenous relatives (*As We Have Always Done*).

own practice. At the end of this essay, I offer a further list of questions organized by what I consider to be some key features to reorient practice for critical meaning-making.

In some ways, my current understanding of practice is the result of literary study, bringing together teachings from the fields of rhetoric (especially disability rhetorics and Cultural Rhetorics), recent Black feminist scholarship, and Buddhist or dharma literatures, and putting them into conversation with one another. In equally important ways, it has been a result of my own practice in recent months. A couple of years ago, I was reading a lot of rhetorical theory and came to identify as a rhetorical theorist as I found pleasure, insight, and a sense of empowerment in rhetoricians' compelling analyses of how power operates in and through meaning-making systems.[76] In the next section, I will summarize what I find most useful about this work, which I think of as "transformative rhetorical theory." I also felt frustrated, however, as these scholars emphasized the importance of "practices" in their analyses, yet I never came away with a clear understanding of what exactly "practice" was pointing to, particularly when I tried to extend the analyses to my own lived circumstances.

Subsequently, I began pursuing a growing interest in dharma practice,[77] especially as I joined Recovery Dharma, a community that uses Buddhist teachings to support recovery from addiction (access *Recovery Dharma*). And, concurrently, as the pandemic gained steam in 2020, I started listening to adrienne maree brown and Toshi Reagon's podcast *Octavia's Parables*, in which they study the works of Octavia E. Butler for teachings about survival, community organizing, and transformation amidst oppressive and apocalyptic conditions, and which led me

[76] Such rhetoricians include (but aren't limited to) Adam Banks, the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab, Ellen Cushman, Jay Dolmage, Stephanie Kerschbaum, Margaret Price, Victor Villanueva, and M. Remi Yergeau.

[77] e.g., Thich Nhat Hanh, Lama Rod Owens, Stephen Batchelor.

to other Black feminist teachers including Prentis Hemphill and Alexis Pauline Gumbs.[78] What the academic rhetoricians miss, and what the dharma teachers and Black feminists offer, is an understanding of practice that is necessarily rooted in one's own practice. That is, in order to grasp what "practice" is about and to get a sense of its potential as a transformative concept, one must practice. With that, these teachers also offer accessible guidance about *how* to practice.

Reorienting to practice means making space for contradiction as we reflect on how our practices connect to intentions and values that we do and do not hold. In my scholarly practice my intention is to serve the causes of movements for racial justice, disability justice, decolonization, and all anti-oppressive efforts. Meanwhile, in writing, defending, and submitting this dissertation for my PhD, I remain engaged in the academic discourse, in this institutional context, and I hope this work is an offering to other anti-oppressive workers in these institutions. I do not want to be serving the institution at the expense of the vitality of living beings—but how can I not be, if I'm engaging the institution, which is in so many ways a deeply oppressive project?

Transformative Rhetorical Theory

I use the phrase "transformative rhetorical theory" to gather the insights of academic scholars of rhetoric in disability studies, queer and feminist studies, critical race studies, and decolonial studies, whose theories of meaning-making are guided by a shared political

[78] Access also brown's book *Emergent Strategy*, in which she discusses how Butler's work can teach us about social transformation in our lives; and her earlier podcast *How to Survive the End of the World* (co-hosted with her sister, Autumn Brown) about "learning from apocalypse."

commitment to systemic transformation, to abolish oppression in all forms. Transformative rhetorics thus include decolonial, crip, neuroqueer, nonbinary, transfeminist, anti-ableist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist rhetorics as interwoven understandings of how oppression works on many dimensions of meaning-making, simultaneously and interdependently.[79]

Transformative rhetorical theory teaches that our power relations manifest in our meaning-making practices. To transform unjust systems of power (oppression, hierarchical violence, etc.), we must understand and reshape how we make meaning. Proponents of such theory understand our world as both constantly changing and powerfully structured by ideologies, narratives, and values concerning the differences and relations among people and environments. Transformative rhetorical theorists (myself included) recognize the destructiveness and violence of the world humans have created, and we believe that it's possible and urgently necessary to cultivate a future that values care, love, and the interdependent thriving of all beings, instead of hierarchy, domination, and exploitation of the many by the few. Far from claiming a disinterested academic perspective, transformative rhetorical theorists strive to be clear in their political values and commitments to justice.

Transformative rhetorical theory conceives of meaning-making as a key domain in which power operates, and therefore conceives of *rhetoric* as a crucial terrain in interconnected struggles against systemic oppression. This is in stark contrast to more popular and traditional

[79] I don't know of anyone else using this term to designate a body of academic work, yet I am indebted to several scholars in rhetoric and composition studies who in recent years have invoked "transformation" as a guiding value for anti-oppressive scholarship (e.g., Adam Banks on "transformative access"; Kristie Fleckenstien in her essay on "A Biorhetoric for Change"). I want the phrase "transformative rhetorical theory" to be a loose designation; I don't want to arbitrate what work does or doesn't deserve the label. Refer to footnote 5 above for a selected list of scholars whose work exemplifies transformative rhetorical theory for me.

notions of rhetoric that either minimize the significance and substance of rhetoric,[80] or posit an exclusive hierarchy determining who can be a rhetorical subject—privileging white Western cis-male canons at the expense of all others.[81] From a transformative perspective, such reductive notions of rhetoric, whether pejorative or canonical, serve to protect existing operations of power because they encourage us to ignore the complex substance of the rhetorics in which we are entangled at every moment of our lives. In short, interrogating power is emphatically central to a transformative concept of rhetoric,[82] which encompasses "not just utterances or inscriptions, but also beliefs, values, institutions, and even bodies" (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 2).

Given this assessment of how deeply rhetorics shape our world, transformative rhetorical theory attends to that shaping in the broadest array of forms, modalities, media, genres, and practices—far beyond speaking and listening, argumentation, or the canonical "arts of persuasion." As Price explains, "Rhetoric is the ways we communicate with each other, not only in writing or by speaking, but also in visual ways, like pictures, or even in subtle ways like the expressions on our faces or the attitudes we bring to each other" (*Mad at School* 26). Further, transformative rhetorical theory attends not only to communication as the sending

[80] Many rhetoricians have pointed out that popular, reductive notions of rhetoric obscure the true impact of rhetorics in our everyday lives. In the "negative" sense of "empty rhetoric" or "mere rhetoric" (Price, *Mad* 26), rhetoric is understood as an ostensible container for meaning that actually lacks substance. Further, "a pejorative sense [of rhetoric] as the intentional misuse of language to mislead and obscure meaning" (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 2) suggests that the "emptiness" of rhetoric serves sinister purposes of manipulation and deception.

[81] The Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab makes this argument in "Our Story Begins Here."

[82] As Cheryl Glenn observes, "rhetoric always inscribes the relation of language and power at a particular moment (including who may speak, who may listen or who will agree to listen, and what can be said)" (1). For Dolmage, "rhetoric is the strategic study of the circulation of power through communication" (*Academic Ableism* 8). Many rhetoricians understand power in Foucauldian terms, where power is not simply hierarchical or repressive but is productive and circulating through discourse (access Price, *Mad* 27-29).

and receiving of messages, but to *meaning-making* in a broad sense. It broadens the referent beyond traditionally narrow views of language and argument, speakers and audiences, to include non-human life as participants in meaning-making.[83]

A practice-oriented approach to rhetorics

A reflexive critique of practice requires attending to two dimensions of practice simultaneously and interdependently: practice as something I am doing (or might do); and practice as something I am observing or critiquing. Sometimes the practice I'm doing is also, reflexively or recursively, the practicing I am observing or critiquing (through reflection[84]). Transformative rhetorical theory is helpful here given its similar view of *rhetoric* as both a mode of action and a mode of analysis or critique. Sometimes I use the phrase "rhetorical practice," to draw attention to how a particular practice is situated and partakes of rhetorical systems—that is, the systematic ways that power circulates through embodied meaning-making. In this understanding, there is no detached, removed, or objective perspective for theorizing practices (or rhetorics). To analyze rhetoric is also to do rhetoric; studying practice is also a practice.

A practice-oriented approach to meaning-making is best explained by decolonial scholars of rhetoric, who emphasize contextually specific yet deeply interconnected meaning-making practices. For such scholars, like the Cultural Rhetorics Consortium (cultrhetconsortium.org), culture and meaning-making must be understood as arising from the

[83] Ellen Cushman reflects on such expansiveness: "Imagine the historical moment when the National Council of Teachers of English is renamed to replace *English* with *Languaging*, or *Languaging Arts*, or *Meaning*. … You may say I am a dreamer. But I'm not the only one" ("Translingual" 236).

[84] This sounds like the cycle of "praxis"; I want to acknowledge that, although I'm deeply indebted to Freire's work, I don't often use the term "praxis" because I find it confusing.

embodied practices of particular communities. This contrasts with an "object-oriented approach" to culture that emerges from disciplines like anthropology and sociology, where "culture" is treated as a static object of study that can be isolated from other human frameworks of meaning. As the scholars of Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab explain, "In addition to the false stability this imposes on the dynamic rhetorical phenomenon within cultural communities, this object-oriented approach to understanding culture also erases the human bodies involved in their makings. This erasure has far-reaching roots and impacts that stem from and recapitulate a colonialist/capitalist paradigm" (CRTL 1.1). In other words, when we think about culture as an object, separate from the creative activities of human makers, we objectify and dehumanize those makers—an effect which serves colonial interests by reserving "human" status exclusively for the colonizers. To counter such dominator thinking about culture, the decolonial understanding of Cultural Rhetorics understands culture (and rhetorics) as manifestations of local yet "relational and constellated" human acts of creativity: "[a]ll cultural practices are built, shaped, and dismantled based on the encounters people have with one another within and across particular systems of shared belief. In other words, people make things (texts, baskets, performances), people make relationships, people make culture" (1.2).

A practice-oriented approach thus recognizes the role of ongoing, active making—or, of practices—in the production of cultures, or rhetorics, or systems of meaning. But this does not mean we focus strictly on individuals; practice is a concept with both individual and collective referents. Cultural Rhetorics scholars use the metaphor of "constellation" to emphasize "the degree to which knowledge is never built by individuals but is, instead, accumulated through collective practices within specific communities" (Bratta and Powell, "Entering the Cultural

Rhetorics Conversation," n.p.). At the collective level, practices bring about the larger manifestations we think of as systems of power. The focus on practice helps us appreciate the dynamic complexities of this relationship between individuality and systematicity.

According to transformative rhetorics, meaning-making at a systemic level emerges from the practices of particular people in particular locations, even as systems also exert pressures on people in significant ways. That is, it is not simply the case that meaning-making systems pre-exist "everyday practices" that function as "internal manipulations" of that system (de Certeau, quoted in CRTL 1.2). Like the object-oriented approach to culture, Western canonical accounts of rhetoric (like Aristotle's "arts of persuasion" or Quintilian's "good man speaking well") would posit meaning-making systems as static and universal for subjects who negotiate within and against them. According to the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab research collective, "rhetorics are made through everyday practices, and these systems of practice, conversely, constitute cultural rhetorics. We study rhetorics by looking at how practitioners negotiate, and even create, established orders" of meaning (CRTL 1.2). In this definition, the relationship between everyday practices and systems of meaning-making must be understood as always in-process, co-constitutive and interdependent. Further, recognizing that practitioners not only *negotiate* but also *create* "established orders" makes it possible to conceive of "orders" at a multiplicity of social scales in dynamic interplay, from very local to more extended and even global frames, "whether they are the workings of a local community of urban Native women, the creation and maintenance of a crafting circle, or the impact of Western notions of 'the body' on actual bodies" (CRTL 1.2).

I can illustrate these ideas by reflecting on my experiences of moving in public as a nonbinary trans person. In going about my daily activities (which are meaning-making practices), I will at times come up against and "negotiate," with more or less ease or difficulty, "Western notions of 'the body'" such as the gender binary. When I'm addressed as "sir" or "ma'am" in the grocery store checkout, for instance, I have a choice whether to come out as nonbinary and point out the cashier's error, or to pass for whatever gender that person has attributed to me. I could describe the pattern of these choices over time as "my grocery checkout practice." A few years ago, when I began transitioning, I sometimes saw such interactions as opportunities to practice acting confident in my sense of my own transness, to "establish the order" of my true relation to gender (and reject the one being imposed on me). I also saw it as a kind of trans-affirmative public education, teaching people to be more aware of how they assign gender to strangers. These days, with my trans identity more comfortably established, I almost always choose to pass (sometimes as a man, others as a trans woman, depending on how the other person reads my appearance) because I just want to get out of the grocery store as quickly as possible. Either way, each time it happens I make a new choice that impacts certain meanings of bodies and genders in this particular time and place—e.g., how the gender binary functions in grocery store checkouts in my area of southeast Michigan; the relationship between how I gender myself and how I am gendered by strangers, in constellation with how others in my community experience these genderings.

Senses of Practice 2: Inherited, Intentional, Critical, Imaginative

Still, while transformative rhetorical theory provides us with robust analytical resources that can account for how power circulates in meaning-making, we also need tools to guide our reflexive engagement with our acts of making meaning, our practices, on the most local levels in our own lives and circumstances. I turn here to Buddhist and Black feminist ideas of practice.

For Buddhists, practice is an active state of awareness in relation to an understanding of dharma, or the true nature of things understood in terms of impermanence and emptiness. In *The Art of Living*, Thich Nhat Hanh describes impermanence and emptiness as two sides of the same coin: both are about the interconnectedness and "selflessness" of all things, one expressed in terms of time (impermanence), the other in terms of space (emptiness, or "interbeing"). In *How to Practice*, the Dalai Lama describes this practice as "single-minded meditation," in which we remove external and internal distractions "through training in the morality of maintaining mindfulness and conscientiousness with regard to physical and verbal activities—being constantly aware of what you are doing with your body and your speech" (23). The "in/out of practice" binary we saw earlier seems to show up here, in the expectation that mindfulness means "being constantly aware." Stephen Batchelor clarifies that the emphasis of practice is better placed on the moment of action in the present, rather than a constant span of ideal awareness over time. For him, dharma is about the accumulation of such moments of coming to awareness. "While 'Buddhism' suggests another belief system," he writes, "dharma practice suggests a course of action. The four ennobling truths are not propositions to believe; they are challenges to act" (7); they are "no linear sequence of 'stages' through which we 'progress'[;] All four activities are part of a single continuum of action…. The fabric of dharma

practice is woven from the threads of these interrelated activities, each of which is defined through its relation to others" (11). Practice is about the making of meaning in an accumulative yet nonlinear array of actions.

The meanings of practice that thus accumulate can be thought of in terms of intentions, purposes, and values. In common usages, practice can mean "preparation for the real thing": like taking a practice exam or practicing a speech before delivering it to its intended audience. Or practice itself can be what's felt to have "actual" substance, as opposed to mere theory or abstract ideas. bell hooks cautions readers: "we need to work against the danger of evoking something that we don't challenge ourselves to actually practice" (*Teaching Community* 163). Practice can be the action that backs up a claim or fulfills an expressed commitment. This is a challenge, it's demanding: "It takes practice to be vigilant.... It takes work" (162).

You might practice something when you want to obtain a desired level of skill or proficiency at something. A practice can be a profession: doctors practice medicine, lawyers practice law. This sense of practice often implies an explicit intention or motivating purpose that is *consciously* held by the one doing the practice (or, the practitioner). But a practice can also just be something habitual, a "usual way of doing something," regardless of conscious purpose or intention (Merriam-Webster). To a nonbinary view of practice, such habitual practices too serve values and purposes even if we aren't aware of what they are. And these practices are learned, they have history; as Prentis Hemphill puts it, we "inherit" them. Hemphill instructs listeners to ask of themselves:

> 'What have I inherited in my habits, in my routines, my rituals, in my expression; what I have inherited, and from whom? What does it uphold? What is the meaning embedded in it?' … We were taught. We took things on, and we practiced them. We may not have been aware that we were practicing them, but

> we may have looked around at the people in our home, or the people in our communities, or the people in our churches … and we recreated the world that they were upholding. It took practice. (*Finding Our Way*, S1 E5)

There are multiple, layered meanings of practice here, where Hemphill is explaining their work as "an embodiment practitioner [or] somatics teacher." There is the sense of a critical practice—somatics—driven by questions ("what have I inherited," etc); by offering these questions—which are personal and reflective, questions I should ask of myself, about my experience—Hempill offers a lesson in somatics, if we take it on by taking up the questions for ourselves. Critical practice is questioning practice. Then there is the sense of "inherited practice," which "took practice" to uphold: we had to work on these things, with instruction and feedback from "the people in our communities," in order to recreate a certain world. Our predecessors practiced ways of being in accordance with particular values, and by following their example we practice in accordance with those same values, too. In recognizing these habitual ways of being as practices, as practiced, Hemphill is inviting us to recognize that these ways of doing things were not inevitable or unavoidable; things might have been different; things could always be different. Hemphill says:

> I'm not proposing a kind of born-again stance where one day you're going to be different, that we can be delivered from all the kind of habits that we've become embodied in. But I am saying that we can become aware of how we're situated in this web of relationship, this web of power. And we can make choices from there. And we can choose what it is that we want to practice into. (*Finding Our Way*, S1 E5)

Practice thus embodies a tension between, on the one hand, a transfer of power through that which we do not choose to practice but is imposed on us by our inheritances; and also the present opportunity for self-empowerment as the potential to choose otherwise, to practice something else.

Practice and speculation: "science-fictional behavior"

For Hemphill and other Black feminist practitioners, practice can get us somewhere new, to a new understanding or expertise or ability. But also, practice got us where we are now. Looking at practice in these multivalent ways calls for speculation and imagination, transcending the limits of rational or empirical validity. Speculation and imagination take shape in practice as "our work to change the world," which adrienne maree brown also calls "science-fictional behavior" (*Emergent Strategy* 16).

In the early days of my transition to a nonbinary trans identity, when wearing skirts in public was still a new experience, I would walk around Ann Arbor self-consciously, on high alert for other people's reactions. This also led me to pay closer attention to how those people styled themselves. Amid the process of making radically different choices about my own dress, I could understand that everyone was making choices, and I could sense that a lot of work, a lot of practice went into those people's appearances, their ability to look put-together in their particular ways. I could speculate about that—about the self-conscious feedback they too were responding to. And in that speculation I could feel some reassurance in how I had not yet been practicing very long at these new ways of embodying myself. adrienne maree brown references "the scene at the end of *The Matrix* where Neo sees everything in green-on-black code," to describe emergent strategy as "a way that all of us can begin to see the world in life-code" (2). For her, practice can be imagined and speculated about as one form of "life-code" among others. I felt that, by speculating about the gender-related choices of strangers I passed on the street, I could begin to see some of the "life-code" running through my reality.

For these Black feminists, this approach to practice also allows for imaginatively drawing lessons from the behaviors and natural processes exhibited by non-human life forms. brown thus learns about emergent strategy from mushrooms and dandelions:

> …the resilience in these structures, which we think of as weeds and fungi, the incomprehensible scale, the clarity of identity, excites me. I love to see the way mushrooms can take substances we think of as toxic, and processes them as food, or that dandelions spread not only themselves but their community structure, manifesting their essential qualities (which include healing and detoxifying the human body) to proliferate and thrive in a new environment. The resilience of these life forms is that they evolve while maintaining *core practices* that ensure their survival. (9, emphasis added)

Alexis Pauline Gumbs takes these ideas further by studying the practices of marine mammals, "specifically as a form of life that has much to teach us about the vulnerability, collaboration, and adaptation we need in order to be with change at this time, especially since one of the major changes we are living through, causing, and shaping in this climate crisis is this rising of the ocean" (7). Gumbs' book *Undrowned* is a gathering of "lessons" that she has distilled from being an "apprentice" to whales, dolphins, seals, and other marine creatures. This "Marine Mammal Apprenticeship" is based on Gumbs' sense of a kinship between marine mammals and Black descendants of the undrowned survivors of trans-Atlantic enslaving ships. Each section title is a verb, an imperative: "breathe," "learn from conflict," "end capitalism," "stay Black," "practice." Here, practice is a directive. In "Practice," Gumbs meditates on the evolution of dorsal fins in dolphins, despite their lacking the dorsal bone structure that fish have, as a metaphor for how, as Hemphill argues, intergenerational practices affect how bodies evolve, how they adapt. She describes "daily writing" as a practice that stabilizes her amid the turbulence of capitalism and white supremacy (which are also accumulations of practice). Ocean currents are material conditions or natural forces that we cannot control, but we need to

exist in them because they are the water we swim in. Our existence, our life is characterized by our being in relationship to the conditions we're in. Adaptation through intergenerational practices ("dorsal fins") allow us to work with and in these currents, giving us some stability to navigate through these circumstances.

At the same time, this is an adaptation for survival of material conditions that are *not* natural—they were chosen, they were practiced, and we continue to practice them—yet the truth that these conditions have been practiced into being by our predecessors doesn't nullify the truth that they are deep and powerful and they aren't going away except through enormous collective effort and transformation (through practice).[85] Gumbs' kind of dorsal practice (her example is "daily writing") is thus always about "find[ing] stability in practice when, for our communities, housing and financial stability are often out of reach and capitalism tears our roots up again and again" (45). She then asks: "What are your dorsal practices? What evolutionary repetitions have you cultivated to move through oceans? What are the ones you need to cultivate for the waves moving you now?" (ibid).

If I'm using a "dorsal practice" in my journaling, it's in a very different relationship to the oceans of white supremacy and capitalism. As a white beneficiary of colonization, generational wealth and education, I've always (and nearly everyone in my extended family has always, as

[85] Her own experience of disability also informs Gumbs's meditation on Practice in a significant way: "My own backbone has been teaching me something too. My pediatrician diagnosed me with scoliosis as a school-aged child, and we may never know if I was born this gorgeously crooked or if the early weight of heavy books caused a shift in how I would carry myself through this life. What we do know? The books certainly were heavy and I haven't yet put them down. And also I walk, sit, and move in the world in a way that overstretches part of me, compresses the other side. My spine shoulders the tense work of keeping me together, keeping me from falling over as I lean through hallways, doors, and other passages.

"Some say that the descendants of survivors of the middle passage all have our own version of pelvic and spinal tilt, of makeshift movement, of putting our bodies back together to somehow carry what we should never have had to carry" (46-47).

far as I know), had housing and financial stability. Capitalist white supremacy and settler colonialism have given such benefit to me at the cost of extreme violence upon people like Gumbs and her ancestors and relatives. Gumbs is a writer and scholar making the offering of her dorsal practice ("This is one," she writes: "Daily writing is my most dependable dorsal practice" [44]) by sharing "this" text on social media, and then publishing it in a book that I bought at my local bookstore. I am a beneficiary of Gumbs's practice too. I need my practices to hold these contradictions and face the truth of how I am implicated in these systems of harm, so that I might practice toward something different.

Ways of Practicing: some working guides for reflection

I want to end by offering an emerging set of working guides or ways of thinking about practice informed by these readings and meditations. These are provisional, not definitive or comprehensive. I offer them as a set of reference points for how I work with practice throughout this project, and as a possible tool for your own thinking about practice. Like similar offerings that I make at the end of my Introduction and in my Conclusion, the provisionality of this writing is intended as a demonstration of "journal sharing"; these are notes from my journal, lightly revised here for clarity.

- **"We're always practicing something"** (brown), whether or not we're aware of it, whether or not our practice aligns with our values or intentions. The point of reflecting on practice is to investigate what it is we are practicing.
- **Practice is always available in the present.** Our practices are always enacted and found in the present, even as they are shaped by past teachings and even as they are also

shaping the future. As an activity I can engage in, practice only happens in the present, here and now. Thich Nhat Hanh teaches that the present moment is all there is; he often uses the refrain "present moment, only moment."

- **Practice is simple in terms of present acts, and complex in implications, or in terms of meaning-making.** In practicing, our actions, choices, and intentions plug in to vast extended chains of relationship—what Rita Dhamoon calls "matrixes of meaning-making," or what decolonial rhetorics scholars call the constellations and relations of cultural rhetorics. Practice is both a storied and storying process.
- **Practice opens a space of contradictions, differences between what we are practicing in reality or in the present, vs. alternative possibilities that we might desire or want to cultivate.** Hemphill: "What is it that we choose to embody in this time?" Recognizing that, given many potential practices, there is the possibility of choice about our practices, the possibility of agency or autonomy. We investigate practices (as in critical practice, or practicing in a critical way), we investigate the present circumstances, the past teachings, and the futures implicated or intended by our practices.
- **Practice is empowering**; an awareness of practice and a commitment to practice (in the light of truth or the dharma) is empowering (Recovery Dharma is a program of empowerment). This empowerment has limits—individual power obtained through practice might still be subject to massive overpowering forces. I'm thinking here of Gumbs's "dorsal practices."

- **Practice is embodied; practice can transform my body.** To practice is to enact a particular kind of embodied relationship to present circumstances (present in space and time), and to enact that relationship through iterations over time.

Chapter IV.
The Question of Figurative Access

In this essay, I develop the idea of figurative access. Figurative access is about how tropes (metaphors, rhetorical figures, etc.) become access devices, enabling ways to move; and it is also about how access devices function rhetorically as well as materially, affecting not only the relations between bodies and space but also relations of meaning.

This theorizing further builds on my thinking in "Methodology of Tropes" by exploring fruitful cross-connections between the study of tropes in rhetorical theory and the study of access in disability theory. I also use the concept of practice here, drawing on my "Methodology of Practice," to think about the patterns of perception, communication, and action where figurative access is at stake. Finally, the theory of figurative access informs the premise of my "Constellation of Practice-Tropes for Journal-Keeping Pedagogy," in that practice-tropes (or the active and reflexive use of metaphors to organize practices) are another way of thinking about figurative access.

The essay has three sections. First, I describe how the thinking that produced figurative access as a concept began in reflecting on my teaching practice, specifically in using metaphors to explain complex ideas to students and to other teachers. Second, I examine what it means to think of access in rhetorical terms, or in terms of meaning-making, by reading critical access

theory in disability studies together with rhetorical theory. Third, I dwell on some examples to tease out the multiple conceptual dimensions of figurative access questioning.

Metaphors are access devices for teaching writing

My thinking about figurative access begins, again, with my teaching practice. Since my first efforts as a graduate student instructor (GSI), I have been curious about the many metaphors that we use to talk about teaching college writing. Both in class with students and in professional development sessions with other GSIs, metaphors are central to our pedagogical vocabulary. We describe close reading and literary analysis as "unpacking" the meanings of texts. We practice "reading like a writer," or "reading like a carpenter," attending to how a given piece of writing is crafted, to inform our own techniques (Bunn). It can be useful to describe a first draft as "shitty" (as Anne Lamott suggests in *Bird by Bird*), but I'd rather call it a "first pancake": when making pancakes, like when writing first drafts, I never expect the first one to turn out right; but in making it, I gain information that helps make a better next one.[86] Writing teachers use the concept of "scaffolding"—a temporary assistive device or structure that supports the process of building something large and complex, but is not part of the final construction—to describe skills practice, short writing exercises, and preliminary draft assignments. Scholarly argumentation is like a conversation in a crowded "parlor" or "ballroom" (more on this example shortly). Each of these metaphors feels useful to us because they help us help our students gain *access* to the difficult tasks of writing in college. They help us conceptualize and articulate ideas about writing that we want to teach to our students.

[86] I first learned this metaphor from my friends Nikki Stevens and Molly Morin.

In "Methodology of Tropes," I examine "troping" as a concept of how meanings move. Tropes facilitate the movement of meanings. And, in the examples above, tropes help teachers and students of writing make moves; tropes provide ways to move.[87] What if we investigate the metaphors we use in teaching college writing as a question of access? My question builds on the work of critical disability studies scholars who in recent decades have argued for centering disability—as lived experience, subject matter, and critical praxis—in the teaching of writing.[88] Such scholars have also more recently argued that Composition Studies needs to create a "culture of access" to redress the continuing legacy of ableist exclusion that is historically central to academic institutions writ large.[89] But "access" is about more than progressive values like diversity and inclusion, getting everyone "in the door" regardless of difference. It's also not always about equity and redressing histories of oppression: while access is often a central concern to movements for inclusion and justice, it's about more than specific political projects. Access is, as disability theorist Tanya Titchkosky argues, "a questioning orientation, an important way to perceive, speak of, and take action on the relations between bodies and social space" (*The Question of Access*, x). In other words, access entails a deeper interrogation of the living activities of perception and meaning-making, involving all manner of our differences, relations, processes, and systems of power.

Put differently, access is fundamentally rhetorical. What Titchkosky calls "the relations between bodies and social space" resonates with Jay Dolmage's definition of rhetoric as both

[87] I borrow this phrase ("ways to move") from Jay Dolmage's work on Universal Design. See Dolmage, "Mapping Composition."

[88] e.g., Lewiecki-Wilson and Brueggeman; Price; Womack.

[89] Brewer, Selfe, and Yergeau; Hubrig and Osorio; Dolmage, *Academic*; Price.

"the strategic study of the circulation of power through communication" and "the circulation of discourse through the body" (*Academic Ableism*, 8). Titchkosky writes, "Access...is an interpretive relation between bodies. In this conception, we can explore how people wonder about and act within social space—and discover how we are enmeshed in the *activity of making people and places meaningful*" (3, emphasis added). While Titchkosky teaches us that access is always about meaning-making, rhetoricians teach us that meaning-making (or rhetoric) is always about power, whatever its effects. According to anti-oppressive, transformative rhetorical theories such as Dolmage's, our meaning-making practices constitute crucial terrains in the interconnected struggles against ableism, racism, colonization, capitalism, and patriarchy. In short, as adrienne maree brown teaches us (and as I discuss in my dissertation Introduction), meaning-making is a realm in which we can work to shape change. By investigating the metaphors (and other figurative, rhetorical devices) of our writing pedagogies as *access devices*, I hope we can find new ways forward for the practice of anti-oppressive teaching and learning.

It makes sense to consider metaphors as access devices, in that they do allow us, in Titchkosky's words, to "perceive, speak of, and take action" on things, affecting the relations between bodies and spaces. Much scholarship on metaphor lends itself to this line of thought. Cognitive linguists recognize metaphor as a primary structure of cognition, where metaphors and metaphorical concepts "create realities" and "guide action" (Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*). Acknowledging "cultural" differences but largely ignoring race, gender, and disability, Lakoff and Johnson explain how metaphors allow people to "get a handle on" certain aspects of our experience, to make sense of our realities, and to move through the world. They're talking about *access*, understood as that which enables or makes it possible to

take action, perceive and comprehend things, gain particular resources, or move in particular ways. I'm suggesting that tropes are access devices for perceiving, speaking of, and taking action on *rhetorics*, or systems of meaning-making. Calling access a "questioning orientation," as Titchkosky does, suggests that access can always be understood as a question, or as something in question. The question might be: when we teach about meaning-making using particular metaphors, what rhetorics, what systems of meaning are we accessing, or expecting students to access? Who gets access to what with such metaphors?[90]

To me, these are useful questions insofar as they yield insights for further practice, enabling anti-oppressive rhetorical pedagogies to grow in transformative impact. In my essay on Journal-Keeping and in my Conclusion, I offer tools for teaching and learning based on the insight of figurative access. But the questions are also useful for further reflection: by returning[91] to past teaching experiences and thinking through what happened when a metaphor created access to something, I learn more about figurative access, as in the following example.

In the fall of 2014, I'm teaching first-year writing for the first time. My supervising English Department Writing Program (EDWP) has provided syllabus templates that specify course learning goals, major writing assignment genres, and some key readings—the "bones" of the course—while allowing us new instructors to "flesh out" and customize specific assignment parameters, and to choose most of the readings for our particular section. During a "research-

[90] This is both a question about material realities and a question about figurative processes. In these words (who gets access to what) the question emphasizes the material realities of people (who) and objects/environments (what). How can we pose the question in a way that foregrounds the figurative dimension of access?

[91] In my "Constellation of Practice-Tropes for Journal-Keeping," I discuss eight tropes, one of which is Return: the practice of looking back at the memory and the record of past practices, for insight into present and future practice. My reflective narratives of teaching are an important way I use Return to create this project.

based argument" unit, EDWP assigns an article by Mark Gaipa, "Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority for their Writing." To explain to students how to engage multiple scholarly sources, Gaipa uses a metaphor, the "ballroom" of a literary society conference. The idea is that students can conceptualize the positions of different scholars interacting within this imaginary conversational space. This helps students to survey fields of debate, identify their own positions, and establish their claims in their own voice while accounting for what's already been said about their topic.

The ballroom metaphor reflects an approach to first-year writing as giving students access to what compositionist Patricia Bizzell once called "the academic discourse community." Most compositionists today would reject the idea that there is a single "academic discourse community" for students to join, yet the singular emphasis of Gaipa's metaphor for "*the* conversation" implies this traditional notion. "The academic discourse community," like "the conversation," is also a trope. If Gaipa's metaphor creates access to "the conversation" by showing students how to "break into" it, what is "the conversation"? Who gets access to what?

For our class, instead of Gaipa's examples of literary criticism about a Hemingway novel, I want to choose a topic that might feel more relevant to my students. I decide to have students apply Gaipa's conversational mapping exercise to a set of recent social media posts about sexist street harassment (aka "catcalling") in urban contexts.[92] Given my commitments to social justice and my belief that politics can't be separated from the classroom,[93] I also see this as an opportunity to facilitate engagement in a challenging social topic that affects everyone. Things

[92] The arguments we discuss center on a then-viral YouTube video, "10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman."

[93] Note that here I'm quite unironically using the classroom trope, which I discuss at some length in my dissertation Introduction.

go well at first, until a heated argument breaks out between a man who defensively asserts that men should be free to "socialize" with women in public, and a woman who argues that such "socializing" from unfamiliar men often feels threatening to women. Other students grow silent, and the tension becomes painful. I feel both responsible for the conflict that has arisen, and unprepared to productively guide my students through it. I abruptly bring attention to our next topic, inviting the two arguing students to stay after class to talk with me about it more; neither of them stays. I feel like I've exposed the women in my class to potential harm. When I later seek support from the Writing Program regarding how to follow up on the discussion to address this harm, I'm given thorough advice about how to return focus to the official learning goals, and few suggestions about how to help students contend with the violence of sexism, even as it has played out in my classroom.[94] My mentors also remind me that the purpose of first-year writing (according to this program) is to teach students how to "create arguments that matter in academic contexts"; it "isn't social justice class."[95]

Access-questioning means troubling what seems, in the first part of this narrative, a straightforward pedagogy of giving novice students access to an institutionally valued scholarly practice and "discourse community." While a particular metaphor (as part of a larger pedagogical strategy) may create access to something, it can also undermine access to something else. Creating access to scholarly conversation, in the situation I'm remembering,

[94] This story thus illustrates how "the classroom" trope can erase much of what actually, materially takes place in such rooms.

[95] Quoting language from the 2014-15 version of the EDWP learning goals for English 125 which were guiding me that semester, and the words of a program mentor, respectively. Now, in 2021, in light of massive social movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, I believe that things have shifted in EDWP; my perception is that the program has become more encouraging of social-justice oriented subject matter in its first-year writing classes. But the attitudes I encountered in 2014 are deeply rooted in composition studies and continue to influence college writing pedagogies.

was ultimately in conflict with a "social justice agenda" of creating access to a critical intervention against sexism. The ballroom metaphor may create access to certain academic rhetorical skills that are valued as institutional currency. I tried to repurpose the metaphor to create access to a critical intervention against sexism. This was partly successful: my students accessed a conflict of values regarding the meanings of certain gender-inflected interactions (the value of men's entitlement to women's attention, in conflict with the value of women's rights to safety in public spaces). But in the confusion and discomfort that subsequently arose, I didn't feel that I or my students had access to a meaningful process of engagement to learn through the conflict. In seeking support, I gained additional access to academic rhetorical pedagogy according to institutional goals and values. In further reflection, I also gain access to the gap between the institution's goals and those of an anti-oppressive, justice-oriented rhetorical pedagogy that is more in line with my values.

Access as meaning-making: critical access theory x. rhetorical theory

Figurative access is, at its simplest, the idea that tropes, metaphors, and other rhetorical figures affect our experiences of access. This is useful both to critical access theory and rhetorical theory. By reading critical access theory concurrently with theories of metaphor, I have found that these two domains have a lot in common and a lot to learn from each other. And this reading helps us deepen and expand the concept of figurative access to do more complex theoretical work, giving us greater insight into how meanings move. In this section I'll review some scholarship in critical access theory to show how this work already understands access in terms of meaning-making. The value of a concept like figurative access, for critical

access theory, is that it clarifies and deepens the kinds of access-critique we can do, and it expands our resources for creative access practices. And for theories of metaphor, the concept clarifies a purpose and practical application in access-questioning.

Critical access theory refers to a set of ideas developed by scholars within disability studies who investigate the cultural meanings and functions of "access," in a growing subfield which Aimi Hamraie calls "critical access studies" (*Building Access*). Theorists of access in disability studies, and the activist movements for disability rights and disability justice that preceded them, have laid the groundwork for understanding access as a complex meaning-making process. This contrasts with most political and activist discourses, where "access" and "accessibility" refer to a static notion of whether or not people are able to obtain resources, to get into a space, to participate in a social activity. In such usages, "access" is typically treated in absolute terms: you either "have access," or you don't. Further, "access" usually isn't something we think about if we have it—just as a strong swimmer might not think about the water as they swim.[96]

There are insidious meaning-making processes (which are processes of power) at work when access is conceived in these terms. For example, Kelly Fritsch links this thinking to the "naturalization of 'able' bodies":

> '[A]ccess' is generally conceived as an individual state of affairs in which the problem to be resolved arises from the particular body incapable of gaining access. By taking accessibility into account, and by providing 'equal access,' this problem is ostensibly solved. Behind this conception resides the assumption that some bodies naturally fit whereas others need 'access.' As such, the socially just thing to do is to extend access to those who do not easily fit. In this way, demanding access to a space or event can inadvertently reinforce the

[96] I'm thinking here of Margaret Price's description of rhetoric as "the water in which we swim" in *Mad at School* (26).

> naturalization of 'able' bodies while reinforcing the individualization of impairment, class or educational status, and gender identity. ("Accessible" 25)

In other words, 'able' bodies get interpreted through particular meanings, reinforcing or re-making those meanings without altering them. Fritsch is saying that because of systemic conditions in which it takes place, a rhetorical act of "demanding access" can have the effect of shoring up already-circulating ideas and values about bodies as individual units that are either fit (i.e., good) or disabled (bad), in turn shoring up the violent and exclusionary system of ableism.[97]

Theorists who approach access critically can clarify many different meanings and rhetorical currents at work beneath the surface of these more simplistic notions. In the thinking Fritch describes, for instance, what's being conceptualized as "access" might be more accurately called "accommodation."[98] Accommodation implies an existing structure that some (those who 'fit' the structure) have access to as-is, whereas others (i.e., disabled people) need specific changes ("accommodations") in order to gain access.[99] This slippage also manifests in the common approach to accessibility as "a checklist to inclusion...conform[ing] to an understanding in which difference is an individual problem to accommodate" (Fritsch, "Accessible" 25). According to Beth Williamson, the prevalence of legalistic thinking in accessibility discourse also plays a role here: "in some cases technical compliance can replace

[97] In the terms of cultural rhetorics theory I discuss in "Methodology of Practice," this is an instance where a rhetorical act functions to both "navigate" and "create" an established order of meaning.

[98] Neil Simpkins has taught me to pay close attention to the difference between access and accommodation, and to notice how often people say "access" when they mean the latter. The distinction is important because institutional practices regarding accessibility use the logic of accommodation, not access.

[99] Jay Dolmage also sheds light on the difference between access and accommodation in his discussions of architectural metaphors and accessibility, particularly the "retrofit" (*Academic Ableism*). He also has a good critique of accessibility checklists in his article "Universal Design: Places to Start."

and even obscure the [disability rights] movement's broader goals of social, political, and economic integration" (14); so that "[w]hile the principle of access seems infinitely expandable, it often narrows to discussions of architectural details such as stairs and ramps" (17). These are only a few examples, but my point is simply that one way to take a critical approach to access is to recognize "access" as a rhetorical process, involving complex activities of meaning-making. As a "checklist," access gets reduced to a finite set of tasks, implying that there's a point where we can be done with access. The "narrowing" of access shapes how or what we talk about when we talk about access—from infinite possibility to "stairs and ramps."

The most useful theory of access for my purposes is Tanya Titchkosky's approach to access as a "questioning orientation" (*The Question of Access*), particularly as a strategy for complicating representations of access conceived in binary terms (e.g., "having" or "not having" access). For Titchkosky, access involves a complex array of meaning-making processes that we can figure as an ongoing series of questions. As a critical practice, access-questioning is about making these questions explicit. That is, access-questioning means actually asking and seeking to find out: in a given instance of "access," who has access to what?

Reading Titchkosky's work, it isn't difficult to understand access theory and rhetorical theory as being in conversation. While she is a sociologist by training, Titchkosky's career-long emphasis on meaning-making, communication, and interpretive practices (e.g., her previous book is titled *Reading and Writing Disability Differently*) invites recognition as an important contribution to rhetorical studies, in an interdisciplinary or post-disciplinary sense.[100] She makes

[100] The disciplines of composition, rhetoric, and writing studies are historically tied to the writing program mission of teaching and studying academic rhetoric in ways that unfortunately limit the meanings of "rhetorical theory/rhetorical studies" in disciplinary or methodological terms. Reading the work of Titchkosky and others (like

theory out of adept analyses of campus architecture, signage, administrative procedures, and casual interactions. In asserting a concept of access as "not just a word that indicates a lack of inclusion" but "also a way of perceiving, talking, and acting" (13), Titchkosky maps out an opportunity for inquiries of the kind that rhetoricians are uniquely disposed to make, especially those rhetoricians who (in Dolmage's words) understand rhetoric as "the circulation of power and discourse through the body" (*Academic Ableism*, 34).

Thus offering language that helps us combine the insights of access theory and transformative rhetorical theory, Titchkosky's concepts of access as perception and access-questioning are useful for anti-oppressive teaching and learning. Paulo Freire writes that in the struggle for liberation through pedagogy, one "must acquire a critical awareness of oppression through the praxis of this struggle" (51). I suggest that "acquir[ing] a critical awareness of oppression" can be thought of as a kind of access in terms of Titchkosky's phenomenological approach, where access is an "act of perception." In *The Question of Access*, Titchkosky treats access not as a form of justice or equality, but rather as a site of critical investigation through an interpretive method of "restless reflexive return" to the discursive places where "access" has been constituted or represented (15). She explains: "Talk and action regarding *access* can be regarded as the places for a critical pursuit of what *access* is already giving us access to, a place where the ready-made dichotomies of in/out, self/other, and so on, can be addressed" (28, emphases added). The word "access" appears three times in this passage; I italicize the first two instances (and not the third) to distinguish two different usages of the word. The two italicized instances both refer to *discourse about* access, or, *what we're saying and doing about* whatever

Sara Ahmed) as contributions to "rhetorical theory" in a larger sense is one way I push back against these limitations.

we think "access" is; whereas the other instance ("...giving us access to...") refers to *access per se*. In the following passage, Titchkosky uses the second sense (access per se):

> One way of pursuing the necessity of opening that which is typically taken for granted, and thus certain, is to interrogate ordinary representations of disability. What do people receive access to in the act of noticing disability in the everyday life of the university environment, especially when what is noticed is something other than an individual disabled person? (50, emphasis added)

The kind of "access" that "people receive" here would be, in Freirean terms, an *uncritical* awareness. For example, within the walls of my university department, I receive access to "disability" (or I perceive "disability"; or, I become uncritically aware of "disability") when I notice and read the sign on the wall inside of our building's elevator that reads: "Please allow wheelchair users and persons with disabilities to board first." An uncritical access / perception / awareness regarding this sign enables me to take the action of complying with the sign's request: I can check the hallway for the presence of any wheelchair users or PWDs, allow them to board the elevator first if I find them present, and then go on my way. This access doesn't become a *critical* awareness unless I make a "reflexive return" (in Titchkosky's words) to interrogate the meaning-making process I have thus accessed. In a rhetorical analysis of the sign I'm describing, a student in my first-year writing class argued that the sign could be more effective at improving the accessibility of the elevator for wheelchair users if it were placed outside, not inside, the elevator; that this would require the university to invest in more signs (one for each floor); and that this raises further questions.[101]

[101] Access-questioning appears in the pedagogical strategy Alison Kafer and other disability studies teachers call an "access audit," replacing the ableist fantasy pedagogy of the "disability simulation" exercise (which misguidedly purports to teach nondisabled students "what it's like to have a disability") with a critical examination of built environments, asking who has access to what. I had students in my class conduct an "access audit" of our classroom's vicinity, which leads to rhetorical analyses like this.

This correspondence between Freire's claim that critical awareness comes only through engagement in praxis ("reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it," 51), and Titchkosky's theory of questioning access as perception organized by a "restless reflexive return," supports the idea that access-questioning is a transformative rhetorical practice. As I suggest in "Methodology of Practice," we can attend to such everyday behaviors as "talk and action," and our "acts of noticing," as practices that have significance within larger systems of meaning and value. (I thus might describe the above example as a reflection on "elevator practices.")

Figurative access, 1: a type of access, expanding Adam Banks's taxonomy

Given that access is thus a meaning-making process (or in other words, given that access is rhetorical), it makes sense to study it using the tools of meaning-making (or of rhetoric). Still, access has many dimensions. *Figurative access* refers to a way of framing and naming specific instances of access in which rhetorical figuration is centrally at issue. It is one kind of access among many that can be marked by analytical distinctions. To this end, Adam Banks offers a "taxonomy of access" that includes "material," "functional," "experiential," and "critical" access. Each of these terms foregrounds particular dimensions of the relationship between bodyminds/users and social spaces/technologies. For example, my *material access* to a computer is about my ability to own or borrow it, or to interact with it in the most basic, physical ways—touch it, move it, give it to someone else, take it apart. But if I want to use the computer to run a particular program, I also need *functional access* to it, such as an

understanding of how to input the appropriate information and commands.[102] Banks's theory of access is specific to African American rhetorics and the racist inequities in technological access in the United States. Without erasing the racial politics of his theory, I want to work with his idea that, at a meta-level, it is useful to have theories that can describe multiple categories of access, and to define concepts that help us distinguish between such dimensions of access, because such analytical distinctions can facilitate more complex and more insightful access-questioning.

Analytical terms that mark different kinds of "access" can be used not only to differentiate among particular dimensions of access as perception/experience (as in the terms of Banks's "taxonomy"), but also to differentiate between approaches or ways of theorizing access more broadly. For example: "consumptive access" describes the idea of "allowing people to enter a space or access a text," as opposed to transformative access (from Banks), which "questions and rethinks the very construct of allowing" (Brewer et al. 153-154). Marking these different conceptual orientations to "access" can help scholar-activists challenge ableist cultural norms.

Figurative access is both a "type" of access, a representation of certain aspects or dimensions of the relations between bodies and social space; and it describes a way of thinking about access more broadly. That is, I can observe figurative access as a phenomenon that is

[102] In a scene from the movie *Zoolander*, the protagonists break into the villain's office, gaining *material access* to his computer. But they have no idea how to turn it on or navigate its operating system. In their struggle to gain *functional access* to the computer to obtain incriminating files, they end up smashing the computer open only to wonder, "Where'd all the files go?"

different from, say, material access;[103] and, at the same time, by theorizing access broadly in figurative terms, I am suggesting that all such distinctions are tropological, meaning that they are not hard-and-fast distinctions but rather relative patterns of meaning that "shade into one another" (as Burke says of the four master tropes). The question of figurative access, then, is an opportunity to leverage such troping to clarify the connections between different forms of access.

Figurative access, 2: ways to shape the movement of meanings

With this term "figurative access," I'm also suggesting a new shorthand for emergent understandings of how meaning-making shapes the power relations that make up our world. This term—a representation of a concept—is a tool for doing things with, a tool for making changes to the world-shaping processes of meaning that we currently have. In particular, the concept of figurative access is a tool for surfacing all the ways that figures move, creating relations of meaning that are pathways for other kinds of movement and action.

The terminology of "figure" is itself limited in this regard, implying "form," "shape," a relatively fixed entity.[104] There is more movement in the word "trope," similar in meaning to "figure" yet also carrying a sense of movement in its etymology. *Trope* comes "from the Greek τρόπος (tropos), 'turn, direction, way', derived from the verb τρέπειν (trepein), 'to turn, to

[103] To return to one of my writing pedagogy examples from the beginning of this essay: when I need to draft an essay, a figurative access device like "first pancake" can help me get started, but I also need material access to space, time, and writing tools.

[104] Even though my theory emphasizes tropes and tropology, I prefer to call it "figurative access" as a more-accessible alternative to either "tropic access" (which has potentially confusing geographical resonances) or "tropological access" (which to strongly evokes a specialist's jargon).

direct, to alter, to change'" (Wikipedia). A trope is a turn; a trope turns something's meaning into something else, some other meaning. Metaphor as metamorphosis; figure as transfiguration. As a turn, a trope can be (or make) a way to move. As I argue in "Methodology of Tropes," the concept of "trope" can be used in various ways (e.g., tropes, troping, tropologies) to recognize such movements of meaning and the pathways or relations that are created, maintained, and potentially altered by these rhetorical and figurative means.

In this section I will trace some of these movements by looking closely at Jay Dolmage's idea of access as a "way to move": figurative access is a concept for thinking about how figures move and how they shape ways to move. Finally, I discuss a phenomenon known as the "curb cut effect"—the tendency for "assistive technologies," originally designed to redress disability-related access barriers, to lose their associations with disability as they become widely used. The curb cut effect is a useful case that illustrates how access-questioning can proceed along multiple intertwined paths in material, technological, and figurative dimensions.

Jay Dolmage's spatial metaphors

In *Academic Ableism*, Dolmage models figurative access-questioning as a practice that attends to multiple dimensions of access, showing how the material and ideological are interwoven. He argues that higher education is historically responsible for the oppression of disabled people, showing the ways that broad exclusions[105] are maintained even as institutions pursue liberal reforms for diversity and inclusion. The book also provides tools that readers can

[105] Dolmage's focus is ableism, but he also explores how academic ableism is interwoven with other forms of oppression, particularly racism and colonization.

take up to analyze ableism at work in their own educational contexts. To orient readers to this critical practice, Dolmage presents a new "map" of academia using three key images: steep steps, the retrofit, and universal design. "These three images," Dolmage says, "represent spatial metaphors that come from within the field of disability studies and nicely articulate the way space excludes, the ways space can be redesigned, and the ways space can be more inclusively conceived" (42). Dolmage wants these metaphors to be "readily recognizable" to readers who can apply them to critical interrogation of their own environments (ibid). In other words, the metaphors become resources for the practice of access-questioning.

Both figurative access devices and architectural ones, the steep steps, the retrofit, and universal design are neither strictly abstract concepts nor strictly material, built entities, but both/all at once. Using them as tools for critical practice calls for an approach that "flips back and forth between physical space and rhetorical space" (9). "Rhetorical space" describes the idea that spaces hold and communicate meaning just as much as language does; to "flip back and forth" between the physical and the rhetorical is one kind of movement that I'm theorizing with the term figurative access. Dolmage explains why it is important to recognize connections between the physical and the rhetorical in our institutions:

> Something like the steep stairs outside of a university lecture hall can be critiqued as a spatial and architectural feature that excludes; the stairs can also be understood as making a rhetorical argument or sending a message at the same time; and also at the very same time the stairs should push us to understand that other features of the institution that may not be as immediately recognizable to us, also set up steep steps—and these can range from the subject matter being spoken about in that lecture hall, to the rote, stand-and-deliver model of pedagogy and its toll on many students and many teachers, to the actual cost of being in that lecture hall in the first place. When we bring together a study of rhetorical space, institutional critique, and disability studies, we have to understand that all of these things are connected.

> This connected reading shows that while the stairs may keep out certain bodies and exclude certain disabilities, institutions don't just make it hard to get around in wheelchairs or on crutches—though this is absolutely part of how academia excludes. Instead, physical inaccessibility is always linked—not just metaphorically—to mental, intellectual, social, and other forms of inaccessibility. (9)

Focusing on the steep steps here, Dolmage highlights three meanings of this image: first, steps literally obstruct access for those with certain mobility impairments. Second, being representative of architectural aesthetics that signify the university's values, the steps make a statement that we might translate as: "this is the way to learning and knowledge; only those who can climb up here independently deserve to participate in this learning and knowing." Third, if the steps carry such a message, then we may find similar meanings in other aspects of the university's spaces and practices. Thus, Dolmage shows how "steep steps" becomes a figure, a pattern of meanings that we can look for to find similarly obstructive devices in our teaching, even if those devices have nothing to do with physical movement.

By asking questions about figurative access, I'm trying to push against the conceptual limitations of binary or categorical thinking. Access transcends the hard distinctions between clear-cut categories in a taxonomy of access. We can see the struggle against these limitations in Dolmage's writing, as he's saying that these relations of meaning are metaphorical, and they are also *more than* that. Even as he describes his approach as "flip[ping] back and forth" between the physical and the rhetorical, he is also saying that access is never just one or the other, even as the conventions of this kind of (academic) argumentation limit the way he can make his point, so that he relies on the image of toggle switch to convey something yet more dynamic. Consider the sentence that concludes the quotation above: "physical inaccessibility is always linked—not just metaphorically—to mental, intellectual, social, and other forms of

inaccessibility." The emphatic interjection "not just metaphorically" evokes a reductive understanding of metaphors, similar to the common-sense ideas of rhetoric I discuss in "Methodology of Practice." The point isn't to pin down a definition of "the metaphorical" but to develop a practice of noticing and investigating the movement of meanings. The book *Academic Ableism*, Dolmage explains, "moves back and forth between… a perspective in which we can use disability studies to effectively critique education, and a perspective in which disability is still actively submerged or controlled within academia, in which there is no more ableist location than the university"; he adds that bringing disability studies together with rhetoric (as I've already discussed) helps to "facilitate this movement between spheres" (7). Just as a taxonomy is useful for analytical purposes even as realities are too messy to fit categories perfectly, "perspectives" and "spheres" are useful metaphors to name relative points of understanding; I've been using the term "dimensions" to do similar conceptual work. But in describing different dimensions, we shouldn't get too attached to the figures themselves as if they represent static entities.

Emphasizing the movements of figures, or movements with figures, rather than particular figures themselves—the troping rather than the tropes—challenges this kind of limitation. Looking more closely at Dolmage's analyses in *Academic Ableism*, I notice that he uses verbs of physical movement to describe the patterns in meaning that connect physical structures to ideological and pedagogical ones. Here are two examples: "in the construction and maintenance of the steep steps there is also a latent argument about aesthetics or appearances, one that *trips* over to the classroom, into ideology and into pedagogy, where teachers are also sometimes concerned about pattern, clarity, propriety—and these things are

believed to be 'beautiful'" (2, emphasis added); "People with physical disabilities are assumed to be cognitively disabled, representations of physical disability often rely on reinforcement from suggestions of mental or physical deficit, something we might call 'disability *drift*'" (9, emphasis added).[106] Disability "drifts" from the apparent presence of one impairment to the assumed/imagined presence of others, just as the aesthetic argument of steep steps "trips" into ideologies or pedagogies. "Disability drift" might be considered a specialist term in rhetorical theory, referring to this figurative movement by which we misread disabled bodies as more disabled than they really are; Dolmage discusses this "drift" among other disability "myths" in his earlier book *Disability Rhetoric*). "Tripping" feels more colloquial, spontaneous—evocative of many kinds of movement—a stumble, or a journey, or a chemical-induced state of altered consciousness.

Both verbs, drifting and tripping, are useful (and there may be any number of others we could use): again, my point isn't to pin down specific definitions but to call attention to movement itself, to practice noticing the movement of meanings according to particular patterns.

My goal is a conceptual clarification of tools that help us get a more detailed and nuanced grasp of a complex set of lived dynamics, power relations, and meaning-making processes. Questions of figurative access might be: how do these figures move? What other movements do they make possible? What, how, when, and where does troping enable or disable movement, or critical insight, or agency, or possibilities of things being otherwise?

[106] My late teacher Tobin Siebers, who introduced me to disability studies before he passed in 2015, would gloss this ableist assumption--that a wheelchair user (say) must be hard-of-hearing, blind, in pain, "slow" or "unstable," etc--as the assumption that one is "disabled all the way down."

Questioning the curb cut effect

I want to end this section by returning to the idea that figurative devices (i.e., metaphors and other tropes) can function as access devices, as I discussed in the first section regarding metaphors in college writing pedagogies. Starting from this idea, my curiosity about the relations in theory between "access" and "rhetoric" led me to name the concept of figurative access as a tool for deepening the critical practice of access-questioning, a tool that might help to transform systems of meaning-making that maintain oppressive social conditions. Figurative access-questioning is a practice of attending to how figures move and create ways to move, both in "physical space" and "rhetorical space" (recognizing that these dimensions are never truly separate or separable). Consequently, this practice involves recognizing that, conversely, all access devices function figuratively as well as materially.

For instance, take the phrase "access device" as a general signifier for those physical, material tools that enable you to perform certain actions or move in particular ways that you otherwise might not be able to without them. To borrow a phrase from Burke, "examples may be offered at random": a doorknob, a cane, a light switch, a wheelchair, a screen-reader, a map legend, a hearing-aid, a can opener. Some of these devices are more associated with disability than others. My point is that "access device" is itself a trope that moves and creates movement of meanings, which are deeply tied to other kinds of potential movement.[107]

[107] This idea is deeply informed by Dolmage's discussion of his second spatial metaphor, "The Retrofit" (*Academic Ableism*, chapter 2).

The “curb cut effect” is a phenomenon that illustrates the connections between the material and tropological dimensions of an access device. A curb cut is a small ramp built into the concrete ledge between sidewalk and street, usually found at street corners and crosswalks. Initially conceived to remove barriers for wheelchair users, curb cuts also increase access for strollers, bikes, carts, or anything else on wheels. The “curb cut effect” is shorthand for the ways that technologies designed specifically for disabled users eventually benefit “everyone else” (i.e., nondisabled people) as well (Jacobs). Aimi Hamraie argues that “the curb cut has also served as a storytelling device in liberal narratives of inclusion and good design,” a rhetorical strategy to persuade people to embrace inclusive practices. The story teaches that we should make curb cuts because they’re actually helpful for everyone. But, Hamraie says, arguing that “barrier-free design benefits ‘all’” has the additional effect of “[r]einforcing the nondisabled, normate status of the ‘community’”; further, it “dematerializes the racialized, gendered, and classed dimensions of difference—even within the category of disability” (95). In other words, we can register movements enabled by the device in question through both material and figurative realms. The physical curb cut becomes a figurative access device, increasing rhetorical circulation of—and thus widening access to—“good design” practices that will increase physical access. At the same time, the movement of the figure brings with it an assumed, universal “all” that erases difference, making it more difficult for “the community” to recognize and respond to specific experiences and needs of its different members. As Dolmage puts it, the anti-ableist rhetoric of the curb-cut effect often “drift[s] away”; assistive technologies become simply technologies (*Academic Ableism* 87).

Such troping movements have become particularly visible in the context of the covid-19 pandemic, as many members of disability communities observe the irony and hypocrisy of how suddenly practices of remote work, asynchronous teaching and learning, increasingly flexible scheduling, and many other practices of accessibility became widespread. For a long time before the pandemic hit, disabled people had been asking institutions to adopt similar practices to make their workplaces more accessible, but were told it would not be possible.[108]

Transformative access to meaning-making?

"Transformative access," according to Adam Banks, is the idea of an oppressed people being able to use social technologies, not only to participate in dominant social and political systems as they exist, but also to challenge and change those systems toward a more just future. I'm thinking about how "meaning-making" can be figuratively conceived in systemic terms, as something like a "social technology" to which people can gain transformative access, not just to participate in social exchanges of meaning but to change how those exchanges function—disrupting hierarchical violence, for instance, and instead practicing more caring and interdependent relations. I'm thinking about teaching and learning practices that can fundamentally shift how rhetorics shape the world.

This is a figurative process in which we gain access to something: we gain access to the potential and actual transformation of realities by activating tropological relationships between different "characters" (or conceptual or material entities).[109] Metaphors like "intersectionality"

[108] Access Mia Mingus's blog post, "You Are Not Entitled to Our Deaths: COVID, Abled Supremacy and Interdependence."

[109] "Character" is the term Kenneth Burke uses, tentatively, to refer to such entities; for him, tropes work by establishing relationships between characters. I discuss this in detail in "Methodology of Tropes."

(Crenshaw), “matrix of domination” (Collins), or “matrix of meaning-making” (Dhamoon) are good examples to interrogate how a figurative device can give us some kind of access to how systemic power works and how it might be shifted toward justice. This would be an important direction for future thought and practice with the idea of figurative access.

For now, I’m staying with the question of how metaphors create access to writing pedagogies. To pursue the question of transformative access to meaning-making in college writing pedagogies, I argue that we need to make a habit of continually asking: when teachers and learners go about their meaning-making work with particular pedagogical tools, who gets access to what? The goal of my theory is to facilitate such questioning.

I conceptualize “pedagogical tools” from the multiple perspectives of my professional and scholarly practice. As a reader and maker of pedagogical theory, I investigate particular “tools” and “strategies” of teaching, the assumptions that drive their construction and use, as well as how they function, and how they impact pedagogical processes. As an instructional consultant, I aim to cultivate teachers’ experimentation with different teaching tools and approaches, and I help my clients work with students’ feedback about the approaches they choose. As a rhetorician, I approach “tools” from a figurative, or *tropological* perspective (that is, in terms of tropes and tropology), as a way of foregrounding the work of meaning-making. Thus, my study of “tools” emphasizes the conceptual and rhetorical dimensions of teaching techniques: the assumptions that make them sensible, the orientations they support, the “ways to move” that they open and/or obscure. Tropology provides vocabulary for systematic theory and practice with “teaching tools” as *devices* that have figurative/rhetorical as well as material and practical dimensions: to a rhetorician, a “device” might be a figurative entity (e.g.,

asyndeton or onomatopoeia) or a physical object (e.g., a hammer or a smartphone). And finally, as a disability studies scholar, I investigate tools primarily in terms of how they affect access, how they enable people to move in, act on, and make their worlds in particular ways. All pedagogical tools—assignments, lesson plans, facilitation strategies, assessments, etc.—are access devices, subject to access-questioning.

Chapter V.
A Constellation of Practice-Tropes for Journal-Keeping Pedagogy

In this essay, I discuss journal-keeping in terms of the concepts developed in my other essays, that is, in terms of tropes, practice, and figurative access. My goal is to furnish readers with a vocabulary of useful rhetorical concepts that will make it easier to use journal-keeping as a resource for anti-oppressive learning and teaching. In this introductory section, I'll orient readers by first explaining how my approach is different from other ways that journal-keeping is often conceptualized. Then I will offer a brief overview of the eight tropes presented here, along with an explanation of the "constellation" metaphor (drawn from the work of Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab) as an organizational scheme for working with the tropes.

I'm using *practice-tropes* as a type of conceptual access device that facilitates reflexive engagements in meaning-making informed by both the methodology of tropes and the methodology of practice, working in tandem. The "practice" side of a practice-trope is about emphasizing the active, in-process nature of the thing in question. For journal-keeping, this means that rather than objectifying, closed-end questions of what is or isn't a journal, these concepts are driven by open-ended, practical questions: what can a journal do? How does it work? What's its purpose? What are its possibilities? What can we do with journals?

The "trope" side of a practice-trope means that the concept works specifically by leveraging figurative relationships within the concept, and through associations and meaning-

connections with other ideas. This conceptual work can be thought of as "troping," or "metaphorical thinking," or "tropological critique": basically, it boils down to exploiting any aspects of an idea that are brought to bear through figurative meaning-relationships to the thing in question. Following figurative connections is a playful, imaginative, open-ended activity that generates insights that can be put to practical use—bringing what we learn from "trope" back to what we're trying to do in our "practice." As an example, a tropological approach to journal-keeping is interested in thinking about the meanings, connections, and differences between diaries, notebooks, journals, sketchbooks, daybooks, and so on—not to evaluate or pin down distinctions according to specific criteria, but to think about what (for instance) happens in my practice if I think about a volume I'm using as a "sketchbook" versus a "notebook."

In its current form, this essay leans toward the "trope" side of the practice-tropes under discussion. I dwell on the figures of Keeping, Sharing, Exercise, Expression, Experiment, Containment, Return, and Devices, turning them over and considering many examples that appear in literatures of journal-keeping pedagogy to tease out possible conceptual dimensions of each. In future work, I hope to develop these concepts more in the direction of practice. I've begun to do so with some tropes here by including some more specific thoughts about putting it to use "in the classroom," or in teaching and learning practices.

Defining "journal-keeping" for pedagogical purposes

As I begin my pedagogical work, whether it's in narrating this essay or introducing my journal-keeping assignment to students on the first day of a new semester, I start with a

general “definition” of journal-keeping, in practical and tropological terms, a working-assumption or a place to start, open to question, critique, and changing meanings as we work with it.

Here is my definition: Journal-keeping is an iterative practice of a) composing, or making texts or images (et cetera), that express, record, or document one’s personal experiences; and b) maintaining an archive of these compositions, texts, images (etc.) for one’s own use over time. Being a personal practice, journal-keeping takes shape in particular ways dependent on the practitioner’s autonomous purposes and actual lived experiences and conditions. As a baseline for the autonomy that is characteristic of such personal practices, I advance the assumption that journals are *private*: not to be viewed, read, or otherwise accessed by anyone other than the keeper (or author), *unless explicitly invited to do so by the keeper*.

This is the definition of journal-keeping I use in the classroom. The assumption of autonomy regarding journal privacy raises a lot of questions when we put it to work in classroom settings, because I believe that no exceptions should be made for the teacher. When I ask my students to keep journals, I do not collect, read, or even ask them to show me their filled pages. I don’t evaluate journal completion in any way. This challenges widespread expectations that student work ought to be evaluated by the teacher. My students want to know if they’re doing the assignment correctly. When I explain my definition to other teachers, they sometimes say, “it sounds nice, but how do you know whether your students actually do any journaling?” Rather than defend my position by answering the question directly (frankly, I *don’t* know), I ask myself and others further questions like, “well, what does ‘do any journaling’

mean in this conversation? What does 'students actually doing it' look like? Why is this important?"

Rather than expect students to show me a product, I ask them to tell me about their practice. I invite them to share with me—in prompted written reflections, and in conversations in class and office hours—about their experience with the journal assignment, how they are understanding its purposes (or if the purposes are unclear), and what it is or isn't doing for them. The point of this reflection isn't for me to evaluate their experience but to start a conversation about meaning-making and practice. That is, my journal-keeping assignments are an invitation to experiment with a particular kind of meaning-making practice, an opportunity to try something and find out what happens. They ask students to conduct some open-ended experiments in the hope that in doing so students might find purposes or uses of these practices that are of value to them. I want to shift our assumptions away from "the journal" as a closed product that can be assessed in binary terms ("is it complete, y/n?"), toward journal-keeping as a range of useful, open-ended practices to be experimented with and studied through reflexive questions ("what is it for? How does it work? What are our assumptions or implicit expectations about this? How could this be different?" and so on).

Difficulties and opportunities: "experience," "the personal," and "reflection" in Writing Studies

This understanding of journal-keeping raises further complex questions regarding what I've called "personal experience" and the potential limitations of a critical engagement that is framed in these terms. The use of "experience" as a transparent ground of historical knowledge

has been problematized by many scholars, most notably Joan Wallach Scott. She argues that using claims of "experience" to authorize histories of difference "weakens the critical thrust" of those histories (24) because it obscures attention to the ideological systems and categories through which difference is "constituted relationally" (25). She doesn't suggest we abandon critical interest in experience, however—it's "not a word we can do without" (37). I'm suggesting that journal-keeping is a pedagogy that facilitates analyses of how an individual's "experience" is shaped through larger systems of meaning.

Raymond Williams's discussion in *Keywords* offers some clarification regarding a confusion of "experience past" and "experience present" as if into a single category of consciousness. He writes: "Experience past already includes, at its most serious, those processes of consideration, reflection and analysis which the most extreme use of experience present—an unquestionable authenticity and immediacy—excludes. Similarly, the reduction of experience to material always produced from elsewhere depends on an exclusion of kinds of consideration, reflection and analysis which are not of a consciously separated systematic type" (128). In other words, "experience" is a dense knot of immediate awareness and perception, entangled with meaning-making processes that are collective and historical. As Kate Kaul puts it: "An appeal to 'experience' is always an attempt to connect individual experience to something collective—and it involves collision and failure as much as it does connection" (in Fristsch et al. 157). Journal-keeping as an experimental personal pedagogy of trial and error, in a context of supported, reflexive dialogue, is a tool for grappling with these collisions and connections.

The "personal" likewise invites question, especially in the context of Composition, Rhetoric, and Writing Studies, where Jonathan Alexander suggests that it "has always been a vexed subject" (quoted in Kerr 137). For this pedagogy, the "personal" nature of journal-keeping means that this writing "show[s] us to ourselves" (Gere quoted in Kerr, 136). This "showing" might make explicit a "tacitly, even unconsciously, composed" kind of "personal myth"—perhaps "illuminating the values of an individual life" (McAdams quoted in Kerr 136-7). In other words, I am after a way of teaching journal-keeping as a tool that makes explicit, and available to investigation, the complex meaning-making processes that put us in touch with particular ideologies and values, shaping how we relate to one another, including in terms of power and oppression.

The Writing Studies discourse of "reflection" also deserves mention here. When I was a new teacher of first-year writing, I was introduced to reflection as a formal pedagogical practice and genre where students observe and narrate their experience of the writing process in particular assignments. I found reflection immediately compelling, partly because of my interest in journal-keeping, but also because in their reflective writing my students wrote most clearly and confidently. As I began this project, I turned to the scholarship of reflection (especially Kathleen Blake Yancey's work) and "writing about writing" (Downs and Wardle), but what I found serves very different aims than mine. While scholarship on reflection and metacognition has accomplished robust theorizations of how students write, these scholars make reductive generalizations about the demographic makeup of "students" and they impose narrow developmental aims of producing "successful" writers (as represented by the landmark *Framework for Success*: access Behm et al.). Their work tends toward quantification for the

purposes of assessment without being robustly critical of assessment practices which are historically biased (access Inoue, "How"). I still use the genre of written student reflection in my teaching and in this pedagogy, as when I prompt students to write reflections about their practice (as previously described). I'm intrigued by the contradiction here, that so much of writing studies seems to work toward institutional/bureaucratic reproduction and refinement using some of the same tools that I would use to shift and transform those institutional logics. I welcome conversation with scholars of reflection on this point.

Themes in extant journal-keeping pedagogies and literatures

Unlike many other approaches, my journal-keeping pedagogy prioritizes anti-oppressive teaching and learning, involving us in the work of shaping systemic social change by engaging at the level of personal meaning-making practices. In contrast, many journal pedagogies,[110] including popular paradigms like therapeutic journal writing, artists' sketchbooks, illustrated journaling, writers' notebooks, or productivity journaling, are focused on individualistic goals of personal growth, creative production, time management, health and wellness, et cetera.

The extensive literature of "therapeutic journal writing," for instance, treats journal-keeping as a skill to be learned for the purpose of healing and creative self-development. The pedagogical practices of therapeutic journal writing include workshops led by an experienced journal-keeper/facilitator, interactive workbooks with prompts and spaces for writing, and

[110] i.e., the theory and practice of teaching and/or learning journal-keeping as a useful skill, for example via workshops or in published literature, often in "self-help" genres, about how to keep journals.

clinical settings where a therapist guides a client using a journal (e.g. Thompson; Progoff). In this literature, a robust journal-keeping practice is often treated as "the point" or the goal of the pedagogy, with regular journal entries and a large collection of filled journals representing a "successful" practice. Readers are figured in these texts as potential or actual journal-keepers, while authors are positioned as expert practitioners with knowledge and experience to share. While this literature can be especially useful for reader/practitioners working alone or in casual groups, who can find all kinds of tools to experiment with in their own practices,[111] there is often a normative framing of the reader/practitioner in texts of the therapeutic model that implicitly ignores or denigrates differences of race, class, identity, and embodiment or ability. The ableism is glaring in some cases, like Kathleen Adams's *Journal to the Self*: "Patricia was in a wheelchair after an automobile accident…. After a Guided Imagery exercise, she and her classmates drew pictures of the various stages of their inner journeys. Much to the delight of the entire class, Patricia 'forgot' to draw herself in the wheelchair by the third picture!" (37).

Artistic and compositionist approaches to journal-keeping tend to treat journals as means to a particular end, such as a tool in a creative process of generating works of art or as a pedagogical tool in the writing classroom. The artistic model is exemplified in published artist sketchbooks; a good resource on this subject is Danny Gregory's anthology *An Illustrated Life*. In composition studies there are many articles and books about journal-keeping as an option for student engagement, facilitating reflection or low-stakes writing, exploring writing as a process and daily practice.[112] Blending the artistic and compositionist models, Lynda Barry's journal-

[111] In the Conclusion to my dissertation, I describe how in Journal Lab we experiment with such devices.

[112] Toby Fulwiler's *The Journal Book* is a dated yet comprehensive resource on composition pedagogies using journal-keeping. For compositionists, journal-keeping has perhaps been mostly associated with the so-called

keeping pedagogy (best represented in her 2014 book *Syllabus*) represents a whole curriculum that uses journal-keeping as a foundational structure for everyone to use toward the particular purpose of creating autobiographical and fictional comics.

These examples tend to rely on individualistic, uniform, universalizing assumptions about journal-keeping as a systematic practice. In many cases their frameworks are mainly derived from one person's own journaling practice (usually the author's) which is used as a model for others to imitate (see Baldwin; Adams; Barry; Cameron). In *The Artist's Way,* to mention a popular example, Julia Cameron centers her personal story about using journal-keeping (as "morning pages" and other devices which, by citing no sources, she implicitly claims to have originated) as the main tool for a pedagogy of creative and spiritual self-development.[113] In foregrounding individualistic journal-keeping practices, such books address readers as potential journal-keepers, without critically interrogating the collective or interpersonal relations that construct pedagogical engagement with and through journal-keeping. In this emphasis on individual journal-keepers, such frameworks do emphasize the importance or usefulness of a collective/collaborative space of pedagogical engagement in support of individual practices, yet they tend to prescribe standards for how those engagements should happen, or they suggest that a trained specialist facilitator should be responsible for holding that communal space (see e.g., Progoff, *At a Journal Workshop*;

"Expressivist" movement which has largely fallen out of favor in the field, yet which some scholars have recently reclaimed as a critical project (see Roeder and Gatto, *Critical Expressivism*).

[113] *The Artist's Way* also bears similarities to 12-step addiction recovery programs, in direct use of the language of "recovery" of an innate but alienated creative self; Cameron's program is also designed to take 12 weeks. The text also contains many frequent parallels between a commitment to creative recovery and the practice of sobriety.

Thompson, *Therapeutic Journal Writing*).[114] Sometimes authors call for a decentralized, horizontal, "leaderless" community of practice without acknowledging how hierarchies will manifest anyway through deeply-rooted social and cultural power dynamics, let alone offering guidance about how to interrogate or disrupt those hierarchies (Baldwin; Cameron).

I'm drawing heavily on my own practice, too: I've developed my approach partly through practice in my own classrooms as a teacher of college writing; partly through research in literatures of journal-keeping, and partly through reflection on my own personal journal-keeping practices. Throughout this section I share stories and examples from all three of these sources to illustrate the practice-tropes. Yet my approach is different from most journal-keeping frameworks in that I come to journal-keeping pedagogy as a rhetorical theorist with a critical, radically anti-oppressive orientation. Rhetorical theory provides tools for conceptualizing, organizing, and enacting the practices that constitute this pedagogy in keeping with anti-oppressive values of justice, access, interdependence, care, and reciprocity.

The Practice of Constellation / a Constellation of Practices

Approaching practice from a rhetorical perspective means adopting a way of thinking and talking about the everyday actions and choices we make as we navigate our lives in relation to other people, and to cultures, spaces, histories, values, meanings, and more. For me, a

[114] In some cases, these frameworks are "authorized" through a trademarked (and often expensive) certification program, with trainings for facilitators, who are then authorized to teach workshops using that framework. Progoff's "Intensive Journal" is like this, as is Kathleen Adams's "Journal to the Self" program and her Center for Journal Therapy based in Denver, CO. Julia Cameron disavows such a "franchise" model in *The Artist's Way*, saying that "artist's way groups" can be initiated by anyone and are useful for getting started or going through the twelve week program together, but she says such groups should not have a designated leader, especially not one who doesn't participate in the practice itself.

"practice" is simply any action or activity that reflects some larger purpose, theory, or meaningful pattern. To conceive of any given practice as *rhetorical* is to think about that practice in terms of rhetoric. According to Jay Dolmage's definition, rhetoric is the strategic study of the circulation of power through communication, and rhetoric is also the circulation of discourse through bodies (*Academic Ableism*, 8). While Dolmage's definition reflects his emphasis (which I share) on the centrality of power and embodiment to rhetoric, it also more generally reflects a dual sense of "rhetoric" as referring to both a practical modality of communication, meaning-making, or persuasion; and an analytical and theoretical mode of interrogating how those communicative activities work. Generally speaking, when I refer to rhetorical practices, I want to hold both of these dimensions in mind, to highlight how the practice in question is situated within larger embodied patterns and systems of power, meaning, and material and ideological relations, even as it may constitute an option, or a practice that I myself might use.

Concerning journal-keeping practices or journal-keeping pedagogy practices, then, the word "practice" in this essay can operate on several levels. First, it can have a general, holistic referent that is personal to a particular user. For example, I often refer to "my journal practice," meaning the ways I have used journals in the past, my current habits with them, and my collected experiences with journaling (including my ever-growing archive of journal volumes) over time. Similarly, when I speak of teaching journal-keeping as a useful skill, I use this idea of a holistic personal practice to frame the task for my students: the goal I want to help them work toward is to develop a journal-keeping practice of their own and to determine for themselves what specifically this might consist of. Second, a holistic sense of journal-keeping practice can

also be broken down into parts, so that specific elements of journal-keeping can become the focus of pedagogical attention (much like "practicing soccer" can mean practicing specific skills involved in soccer, like passing or dribbling the ball, etc.). My approach in this essay is offering a conceptual vocabulary for focusing attention on such specific elements of practice, represented by the practice-tropes of Keeping, Sharing, Expression, Exercise, Devices, Experiment, Containment, and Return. Each of these terms describes practices that are interconnected in nonlinear ways, such that I find a "constellation" metaphor apt to describe them all together.

Constellation is a metaphor and a practice—a practice-trope—from Cultural Rhetorics, a field of studies informed by decolonial scholarship and activism. The members of the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab situate their practice

> inside a constellation of relationships with other decolonial scholars like Shawn Wilson, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Qwo-Li Driskill, and Malea Powell. In fact, it's through listening to decolonial scholars that we've come to understand the making of cultures and the practices that call them into being as *relational and constellated*. … The practice of *constellating* gives us a visual metaphor for those relationships that honor all possible realities. (Cultural 1.2)

If "constellating" is the name of a "practice" that furnishes a "visual metaphor," this is important because a metaphor provides a way of thinking about or getting a handle on something (as I discuss in "Methodology of Tropes" and "The Question of Figurative Access"). It's not only that practice "gives" a metaphor, but the metaphor enables a particular way of approaching and making sense of things: it allows us to "honor all possible realities." In short, constellation here functions as what I'm calling a practice-trope: a reflexive concept that emerges through practice and facilitates practice as interpreted through figurative meanings or images.

This constellation metaphor came to mind as I was developing this essay, as I encountered the limitation of the "framework" concept that I had been using to organize my gathering and presentation of practice-tropes for journal-keeping. The framework was represented by a diagram of the tropes arranged in a square divided into four quadrants, each containing two tropes, arranged in pairs. I have previously found "framework" to be a useful device for studying the tropes and the relationships between them; it was easier for me to hold four pairs of tropes in mind at once rather than eight separately. The pairings also gave me a good way to test relationships between them and deepen the connections within the pairs. But I also felt myself steered away from thinking through relationships outside of those pairings. I also felt pressured by my framework to stabilize the number of tropes (eight) and make sure that these tropes exhaustively covered the possibilities of this pedagogy. This would prevent me from considering other practice-tropes, like Observation and Structure, that might open possibilities for practice not suggested by my "official" eight.[115] At some point this frustration reminded me of how the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab explains their preference for the "constellation" metaphor over an "intersections" metaphor for multiple categories of difference:

> For us, the metaphor of intersection implies a linear arrangement in which a subject stands at the nexus of straight lines that only cross at one point. This linearity imposes ideas about causality or origins, both of which are generally also obscuring many of the other meaningful relationships between places, spaces, events, people, and communities. And it traps subjects who are literally held in place, skewered by multiple discourses. (1.2)

[115] "Structure" was a trope I worked with in the first constellation I came up with several years ago; "Observation" is a newer one emerging in the process of developing this draft.

Remembering that my goal has been to "honor all possibilities," to open up potential meanings rather than narrow them down, toward leveraging these resources for many ways to move, I found my "framework" of four pairs was failing to represent the dynamic, shifting, multiplying ways that the tropes function together conceptually and practically. The linear, intersecting grid lines are also a trope, a discourse convention, and useful as such to a point; but in staying with the grid, we lose too much of the spirit of practice, imagination, access, and nonlinear movement that are central to transformative ("shaping-change") meaning-making pedagogies and central to how I want us to think about practice-tropes as resources for these pedagogies. The constellation metaphor is more apt because it "allows for different ways of seeing any single configuration within that constellation, based on positionality and culture. We are thinking, for example, of the way that different cultures have different ways to draw relations between stars in the sky, and how naming those relations, those constellations (Ursa Major, the Bear, the Big Dipper, the pathway to Sagittarius) is an act of meaning-making." Rather than narrowing down or ranking meanings, constellation "allows all the meaning-making practices and their relationships to matter. It allows for multiply-situated subjects to connect to multiple discourses at the same time, as well as for those relationships (among subjects, among discourses, among kinds of connections) to shift and change without holding a subject captive" (Cultural 1.2). Constellation thus reflects a potential multiplicity of perspectives and purposes. For instance, a constellation of stars can be a wayfinding device, helping you locate yourself in space; but a given constellation may be more or less available or useful to you depending on your position on the Earth, time of day or night, and particular atmospheric conditions. I'm also thinking of how, when we connect a set of stars or points to represent a constellation, there's

no necessary order in which we proceed to draw those lines. As an exercise in teasing out more of the connections between the practice-tropes in my constellation, I draw and redraw the constellation starting with different tropes and connecting different dots. Thus, this constellation of practice-tropes is actually multiple constellations depending on how we approach them.

This is important to keep in mind as this essay proceeds because I am using a linear compositional form to present a set of concepts that do not have a single, definitive linear arrangement. In one arrangement, I could begin with "the three Exes" —Exercise, Expression, and Experiment—putting them at the center of the constellation. It's useful to think about how these three tropes are closely interdependent, and together they provide a thorough orientation to an individual practitioner in terms of how they go about using their journal. I often have these three tropes at the front of my mind when I am offering advice about journal-keeping to new practitioners. (I do discuss them together at the end of this essay.) But from the perspective of multiple practitioners, the perspective of "classroom" work, it's important to prioritize Keeping and Sharing.[116] Keeping and Sharing are about how we practice with our journals in relation to other people; Simply put, they have to do with who has access to the contents of our journals. So, putting Keeping and Sharing at the center or foregrounding them among the tropes makes sense for an approach to journal-keeping in classroom settings. For this reason, I begin my discussion with this pair, orbiting each other like a binary star system.

[116] In drafting this essay, I have been playing with capitalization: I have been capitalizing the practice-tropes thus when I'm referring to their categorization as tropes within this scheme and using lower-case when talking about one or another of that trope's particular valences. In other words, "Keeping" refers to "the concept of Keeping as a practice-trope for journal pedagogy" whereas "keeping" would refer to any particular act of keeping. I'm not sure this distinction holds, and I'm not sure I've used it consistently. This is a feature of the work-in-progress nature of this stage of my project.

Simply put, Keeping and Sharing practices have to do with who has access to the contents of our journals. When I put words or images onto the pages of my journal, that material becomes potentially available for myself and for others to read, engage with, or respond to it. Keeping and Sharing practices are about how I construct and manage a particular audience's engagement with my journal material. Potential audiences include myself, as I read what I write in my journal either *as* I write it or at some point(s) in the future. And potential audiences include other people who could engage with my journal either directly by reading it, or through remediation. Generally, *keeping* refers to actions that shape how a practitioner engages with their own journals as both "author" and "audience"; while *sharing* describes how practitioners engage other people as audiences to the practitioner's journals or to representations of their practice.

My mentor Sidonie Smith has pointed out that these statements about the audiences of journal-keeping may be oversimplifying the nature of "reader" and "addressee" here. In *Reading Autobiography*, Smith and her co-author Julia Watson discuss the complexity of the relationship between the addressee and the "implied reader" of an autobiographical narrative (88-90). These complexities are greater than I can adequately address in the present writing, but I will offer some clarification for practical purposes. For this pedagogy, the addressee is a rhetorical figure that is operative in the moment of writing, regardless of whether the writer has a conscious or intentional awareness of "who" the addressee is.

This rhetorical figure can be the basis of certain journal devices, as for example the "unsent letter" device that is popular in therapeutic modalities, as described by Kate Thompson. These letters are "not to be shared with the person to whom they are addressed"

(48). They can be addressed to (non)recipients "real or imaginary, known or unknown, living, dead or as yet unborn; they don't even have to be people" (141). In therapeutic contexts, unsent letters are "vehicles for discovering what you really feel, for seeing the emotion of the situation without the usual socially acceptable restraints" (142). Thompson describes an example: "A wife who wrote letters to her husband who was in prison, was astonished to find her anger on the page when she had no firsthand knowledge of it, had never 'felt' it ('I'm not that sort of person,' she said)" (143). Here the "husband" is the addressee, the "wife" is the reader, finding her anger on the page.

For my purposes, specifying what is meant by the "reader" of journal-keeping is most important, because it has to do with the issue of consent, boundaries, and privacy regarding who may read a journal. There is only ever a "reader" here in the actual act of reading the journal, but anyone in the vicinity of a journal-keeper, anyone who has material access to their journal, can potentially be a reader, which raises the need for clear communication about boundaries. This means that when journal practices are taken up in classrooms, it is important for all participants to thoughtfully engage together with these questions regarding journal readers.

Keeping

Keeping is the central verb of journal-keeping practice. When you keep a journal, you are the sole audience and interlocutor to what you compose as your journal entries. Journal-keeping is an ongoing personal practice of any form of writing or composing that produces text and archive intended to subsequently be read, responded to, and investigated—primarily, if not

solely, by the person who composed it. In other words, when you create a journal, you practice composing messages addressed to yourself; and through the practice of *keeping* the journal, you make possible your own future engagement with and response to the messages you have created in it. In this sense, journal-keeping produces opportunities for critical dialogue between one's present, past, and future selves. The practice materializes and makes explicit one's otherwise unarticulated feelings and ideas, which makes them more available to critical reflection and investigation.

Acts of "keeping" might be what constitutes a "journal" as a rhetorical form or genre. Various acts of keeping underpin the introspective and critical potentials of a journal: what I write in my journal, I keep to myself, for myself, for future reference. In order to read and respond to my journal's contents, I return to what I thus have in my keeping. To create a rich dialogue over time, I keep agreements with myself to keep writing new entries, again and again, as time passes. There's a custodial, caretaking aspect of this keeping that is also useful; keeping is about validating and affirming process, in all its complexity, in order to cultivate creative possibility. Embodying the politics of crip, keeping is a challenge to hierarchies of selection and rejection and leaving-behind. It is the refusal of judgments that would negate or close down possibilities or that devalue something just because it doesn't meet certain (normative) expectations. In this sense, keeping involves what I call an "affirmative refusal": journaling means I keep everything I compose; I refuse to throw anything away. I refuse the judgments that could lead me to reject material that isn't "good." Lynda Barry offers a helpful take on this aspect of keeping as affirmative refusal in her short autobiographical comic strip "Two Questions." As she writes and draws, Barry tries to ignore the questions "is it good?" and

"does it suck?" that she habitually asks herself; instead, she practices keeping a "don't know" disposition that withholds judgments as her material takes shape. Julia Cameron asserts that "judging your early artistic efforts is artist abuse" (29). As I keep journals, I don't know what value I might discover in this material if or when I return to it in the future. The value of keeping is thus illuminated by the practice of Return; Return depends on having kept materials we can return to. (I'll return to this point later.)

Lynda Barry describes her "comp book" assignment using the verb "keep" in several ways: "keeping an active comp book is at the heart of this class"; "Keep the comp book with you at all times...and use it for everything"; "Think of your composition notebook as a catch-all that collects samples from all of the elements of your day-to-day life." Containment and Return show up here too: "If you keep up with your comp book all semester, when it comes time to decide what your final project should be about, your composition notebook will already contain the answer" (62).

Keeping means I'm committed to not throwing this journal material away; it also, however, means I'm not necessarily sharing it with others—or at least not yet, or not fully and openly. When I keep journals, I'm writing or composing something that I keep to myself, for myself. I might not even look back at it myself, as Julia Cameron suggests of her "morning pages" exercise: "Nobody is allowed to read your morning pages except you. And you shouldn't even read them yourself for the first eight weeks or so" (10). Yet the practice of keeping always takes place in relation to the possibility of sharing. In a journal-keeping pedagogy—in the teaching and learning of journal-keeping as a skill, or in the use of journal-keeping as a means of learning something else—sharing is crucial to how pedagogical engagement takes place.

Sharing

In the simplest terms, "journal-sharing" happens when you invite another person (or people) to be an audience of your journal, directly or indirectly through remediation. You can practice sharing by showing others your journal, or images of it; you can invite them to view or read your journal's contents; or you might simply describe your journal's contents or your habits with it, and by speaking, writing, or other mediations, communicate these descriptions to others. When other people share their journals with me, it enables me to discover new techniques, new possibilities that might not occur to me, new devices that I can experiment with in my own practice. Journal-sharing is a necessary part of any journal pedagogy because while journal-keeping is a very personal and solitary practice, keepers learn a lot from each other (through journal-sharing) about how journals might work. But sharing is also complicated by privacy concerns: journals are often highly sensitive personal documents, and practitioners are often understandably wary of exposing their contents to others. Many books about journal-keeping are premised on the pedagogical value of sharing. One example is Danny Gregory's *An Illustrated Life* (2008), an anthology of reproduced selections from about 50 different illustrators' and artists' private sketchbooks and accompanying commentaries written by each contributor. Another is Paula W. Graham's *Speaking of Journals* (1999), a collection of interviews, with 27 authors of children's books, regarding their "diaries, notebooks, and sketchbooks."

The tension between keeping and sharing, as simultaneously contradictory and complementary practices, is crucial to how journal-keeping pedagogy functions. Keeping

journals often means *not* sharing their contents with others, yet practices of sharing are also vital to how users cultivate their own journaling skills and habits. In *The New Diary*, a key text of the therapeutic model, Tristine Rainer shows how this tension can be central to a journal-keeping framework. She introduces the tension between keeping private journals and sharing journals with others by narrating the strong moral ambivalence she felt while doing research for the book. Rainer observes that, given the "very private nature" of "the diary" form, its practitioners can experience "total freedom of expression"; she likens this "untamed freedom" to a "wilderness" that should be "defend[ed]" as a "private sanctuary" (x). Her project, however, demands ignoring this preservationist impulse. Figuring herself as a kind of reluctant colonizer, she writes, "I have written a book that opens the diary's uncharted territory for all to enter" (x). Rainer describes her research as a series of transgressive acts of desire: "I have researched [diaries] with indiscriminate passion, read insatiably every published diary I could get my hands on, violated musty manuscripts lying quietly in libraries, and solicited and lured hundreds of private diaries coast to coast from friends and students, acquaintances and strangers. There were diaries in my mailbox and diaries on my doorstep, Xeroxed diaries pushing out of drawers and overflowing files" (x). This description uses hyperbole to parody the extreme privacy of traditional diaries, what we might call an "absolute"[117] form of keeping (as in, say, keeping absolutely private). The "newness" of the *New Diary* is marked by the shift to a more dynamic interplay of keeping and sharing.

Unfortunately, by invoking the colonizing rhetoric of trespass, and using verbs like "violated," solicited" and "lured," Rainer downplays the autonomy that those "friends,

[117] Extending this thought, maybe keeping and sharing are relative points on a continuum.

students, acquaintances and strangers" had in choosing to share their diaries with her. Some diaries were "Xeroxed" or photocopied (this was 1977), meaning that in those cases diarists chose to keep their actual diaries even as they shared copies of them. Yet in spite of her ambivalence, Rainer ultimately finds, in sharing, the basis of a new paradigm or framework for diary practice. In her research, she says, "I found that each diarist had a golden nugget of self-discovered knowledge to share," not only justifying her "prying and treading in a once-secret province" (xi) but leading her to outline this new paradigm: "Individually, we diarists had been limited by secrecy and isolation. In sharing our secrets, and openly admitting our need for private space in our lives, we recognized that we were part of a worldwide phenomenon I have come to call the New Diary" (xii). The shift toward sharing still emphasizes privacy as a shared value, while the practice of sharing drives and supports those "once-secret" practices of journal-keeping. What practitioners keep is not only their privacy but their autonomy. The balance of keeping and sharing becomes the basis for a non-prescriptive pedagogy: "The New Diary is not a system of rules on journal writing; it is an expanding new field of knowledge to be shared" (xii).[118] What's mainly "shared" here is meta-level, theoretical, knowledge about journals and how they work: journal-keeping pedagogy, not journal material or content, which remains private.

Keeping and Sharing in the classroom: confronting evaluative expectations

[118] While I'm indebted to Rainer's treatment of "devices" as I'll elaborate in the section, I'm wary that her framework has a "universalizing" bent, deeply influenced by Jungian psychology.

As I describe further in my conclusion, my goal in assigning journal-keeping to students in first-year writing, or in introductory to women's and gender studies, has been to encourage students to cultivate their own "daily journal practice." Keeping and Sharing in the college classroom (or any classroom that uses certain kinds of normative or institutional evaluation practices) must confront and negotiate assumptions and expectations about who and what a student's writing is for. To me, Keeping and Sharing entails a total rejection of a "teacher-owned" model of journal-keeping assignment, where students are required to keep journals and teachers read those journals.[119]

It seems to me that since normative assessments and judgments make it feel unsafe to practice Expression, a journal-keeping pedagogy must resist those judgments and attempt to create spaces of safety for students to practice Expression in their journals. Once that kind of safety is established, then we can bring in the practice of Sharing as we talk about how sharing is important for helping students cultivate their keeping practices.

Devices

This practice-trope resonates with the rhetorical canon of invention: what do you devise when you're "left to your own devices"? In this expression, the agency of the one in question, their ingenuity or peculiar ways of doing things, becomes paramount. Devices can be inventions; they can be reinvented. To use a (perhaps preexisting) device to achieve a certain effect can be understood as an act of rhetorical invention, enabling us to make new meanings,

[119] Responding to the Bartholomae/Elbow debate over "expressivist" pedagogies, compositionist Susan Welsh criticizes the concept of so-called "confidential" journals where a student writes and teacher reads. In a different context, Betsy Hilbert asserts that such a journal as assignment is "owned" by the teacher, not the student.

new ways forward. We can also invent new devices previously unknown. The line between invention and reinvention becomes blurred when we share our devices with each other.

"Devices" are tools used for particular purposes. Thus, implicit in a device is that it is for something, it does something, it is used by someone in particular… it "works," it does a certain kind of work. Journal devices are like the tools in your journal-keeping toolbox. There are material, technological ones: things like pens and pencils, pages or leaves, books, bindings (spiral, sewn, stapled), Notes apps, cameras, paint and brushes, stickers, tape, printers and scanners, scissors and glue can all be journal-keeping devices.

In a more tropological vein, we can also think of Devices in terms of figurative access. In taking up a device, a practitioner may obtain access to a potentially useful means to do something in or with their journal.

Journal Devices are figures of journaling technique, tropes that signify ways of going about one's practices. In this sense Devices have to do with *techne* as a sense of the "craft" of journal-keeping. We can think here about formatting devices like page numbers, or what I call "scrib numbers" (each entry in a journal gets one numeral in a sequence, regardless of how long it is); filling pages left to right and top to bottom, leaf after leaf; the relationship of recto and verso or the space of the spread across two facing pages; pages or parts of pages left blank—or not. Some journal-keepers, like numerous contributors to *An Illustrated Life*, talk about the "rules" of their practice: Paola Gaviria writes, "My only rule that applies to all cases is that I must finish them; that is, I must draw until the last page is used" (in Gregory, 69). For Peter Cusack: "I only work with a horizontal format. I do not work on the back of any pages. Nor do I think of the composition as a spread" (ibid., 52).

A device can also imply a scheme, a plan, or an agenda. In *The New Diary*, Tristine Rainer describes "eleven possible diary devices" in order "simply to make [the reader] aware of the range of ways to write in a diary" (37). The devices are "like possible moves in a game or steps in a dance. They become part of your repertoire" (37). In these terms, a device can offer a specific script or a protocol that guides the keeper's practice in particular circumstances.

For a teachers' workshop on journal-keeping pedagogy,[120] I offer a distinction between "journal prompts" and "journal devices." "A Prompt," I explain, "is a topical question that directs the practitioner's attention to reflect on a particular experience, memory, event, situation, or phenomenon. A Device is a set of parameters that guide an act of journal writing." To begin our work with journal-keeping practice, to create a baseline for conversation, I invite participants to respond to one or both of the following Prompts: "a) What does 'journaling' mean to you? b) If you have a journal, how do you use it? What is its history?" And I present them a menu of devices to choose from—Lists, Sentence Stems (or Springboards), Timed Freewrites, Dialogues, Steppingstones, and Mind Maps[121]—to generate their responses to the Prompts.

[120] Enriching Scholarship Conference at University of Michigan, May 2019. I describe this workshop further in my Conclusion.

[121] These devices are adapted from Thompson, *Therapeutic Journal Writing.*

Figure 1. Workshop handout describing a selection of journal devices

List
Number your page from 1 to at least 20. Using the Prompt (or a key phrase from it) as the title of your list, write down anything that comes to mind from your experience under that heading. Keep each list item brief: a word, a short phrase or sentence, or a quick doodle. Add repeat items if they come to you.

Freewrite with Sentence Stem
A "sentence stem" is a phrase, derived from a Prompt, that could begin a sentence. For example: "When I write in a journal, I… OR: I use my journal to…." Write out your stem, set a timer for a few minutes, and write without stopping until the timer goes off.

Steppingstones
This is a more complex device that is useful for thinking about how your experience of something specific has developed over time. Starting with your present-day feelings or ideas about the prompt's topic, identify 5-7 major experiences in your past that are also associated with that topic. Write a few sentences or make a simple drawing for each "steppingstone." You may or may not move in chronological order. The useful challenge with this device might be limiting your selection of moments to just 5-7.

Mind Map
Write the prompt (maybe condensed in a word or phrase) in the center of the page. Drawing and writing outward from the center, make a "map" of your memories and thoughts in relation to the prompt.

Dialogue
In this device, you choose an imaginary interlocutor who has things to say about your experiences of the prompt. It might be yourself at another age; a friend, family member, teacher, or colleague; an author (living or past) whose work you admire; a fictional character, or an inanimate object or concept. Freewrite a dialogue between your present self and your interlocutor, about the topic given by the prompt.

Recalling that the word "device" can also be a synonym for "trope" or "figure," the figurative nature of Devices is crucial to their potential as a pedagogical resource. In *Harvesting Your Journals*, Heart and Strickland suggest that "[t]hinking metaphorically…can spark new insights and launch you into unforeseen directions." They then reflect on the title of their book, "a metaphor suggesting that reviewing old journals is akin to harvesting a crop. Long before

writing it, we spent hours discussing what this metaphor could tell us about the practice we ourselves were immersed in; then later, the metaphor gave us ideas for the structure and content of the book" (39-40). Consequently, they extend their "harvesting" metaphor throughout their section titles: "Entering the Fields/Stepping into Your Journals; Reaping the Succulence/Reflecting on What You Have Gathered; Bundling the Sheaves/Combining Related Themes; Celebrating the Bounties/Conserving the Old and Propagating the New" (7). This text thus offers a rich example of how a given metaphor can function as a figurative access device in the context of a particular journal practice. That is, "harvesting" enables a particular way to move in relation to one's own journals: instead of simply being confused and overwhelmed by the contents of an old journal, "harvesting" figures a purpose and an agenda that enables the user to engage with the journal productively.

Devices and other Practice-Tropes

This practice-trope is closely related to other practice-tropes in the sense that each trope in this constellation has certain Devices associated with it that specifically engage that dimension of journal-keeping practice. Any given Device reflects one or more of the other major practice-tropes; in other words, all devices serve purposes that are reflected in the practice-tropes. That is, some Devices are useful because they facilitate Return practices; others because they support effective Containment; and so on. Many Devices serve multiple purposes and can be associated with multiple practice-tropes. We might think of the practice-tropes as "meta-devices" describing larger conceptual patterns across approaches to journaling, whereas

Devices refer to the more specific tools or methods of going about a practice in a particular context.

Devices and the Classroom

Devices can be the specific quantities that are exchanged when practitioners Share with each other about their journals, as we saw in the example of Rainer, and as I did with participants at my Enriching Scholarship workshop.

It's impossible to think about "Devices and the Classroom" without considering controversy over the acceptable use of "mobile devices" —cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc. In the classroom, such devices are subject to regulation and thus politically charged as regulations may create problems for access. These debates over devices (e.g., "laptop bans") are debates about access and about what kind of behavior is expected from students as appropriate for the classroom (don't distract anyone or be distracted yourself). This is a question for further reflection, but one thought I have now is that a journal-keeping pedagogy that rejects "teacher-owned journals" (see "Keeping and Sharing in the Writing Classroom," above) has much in common with a classroom that doesn't strictly regulate or "ban" electronic devices. Just as I don't want to regulate how students use electronic devices in my classroom, I don't want to control how they practice journal-keeping.

Return

There's Returning to where I've been, or what I've done, before. I return to old journals. I return to what I've written in my journal previously. "It all comes back," Joan Didion writes in

"On Keeping a Notebook": my past experiences return to the present—and I feel it. It can be painful, as Lynda Barry observes about reading an old journal: "I'm not sure what it's doing beyond upsetting me, but I want to read it—I want to have another look at that time" (*Syllabus*, 5). Return can be a release of what has been contained.

There is Return as from a journey, a return from "there" to "here." I return to the present after spending time in the past; reading old journals can be an experience of time travel, taking "another look at that time" in which or of which I was writing. Sometimes the act of expressive or associative writing can be itself time travel, or another kind of travel: "Writing can take us into deep and dark places" (Thompson, *Therapeutic Journal Writing*). A journal can be a journey to the underworld, to hell and back.

There is the Return of something lost; recovery of what's been lost. A lost journal may one day be returned. Three times I have lost my journal; once in 2010, and again in 2012, I received messages from strangers who found my email address or phone number written inside the cover, strangers who later mailed the journals to me. The third volume, lost in 2014, has not yet returned to me.

Destroying a journal can mean losing the opportunities that Return might entail. The authors of *Harvesting Your Journals* tell such a story: "A woman who had followed her therapist's 'orders' to ritualistically burn her journals as a way of letting go of the past found it didn't work. Not only was she unable to forget about her wounds but, unable to access her recorded memories, she had lost an important channel leading to resolution, forgiveness, and gratitude" (14). I know the grief of such a lost opportunity; at fifteen years old I destroyed a

journal I'd kept a few years earlier, full of embarrassment at what my twelve-year-old self had to say. I wish, like Lynda Barry, I could have another look at that time.

Harvesting Your Journals argues that these practices require intentional organizing, careful concentration and steady work. Return can be overwhelming… In their metaphor of "Harvesting," journals are "fields" of growing produce—"wheat"—and entering them to "harvest" one encounters "pests intent on frightening you away." The authors explain:

> The more we talked about harvesting, the more stories we heard about people who had succumbed to the 'Oh no's' for one reason or another. 'It got too boring,' some said, 'or 'I couldn't stand wading through all that self-pitying crap!' or 'It depressed me to relive the bad times.' … The message emerging from these stories is, Give in to 'Oh no' and you're likely to give up. Give up and you may lose the possibility of understanding yourself better, appreciating yourself more, and developing your writing—all gleanings of a rich and nourishing harvest. (13-14)

They offer "antidotes," suggesting that the "oh no's" are poisonous. Ultimately, "Harvesting" is about yield, enrichment, nourishment, wealth, growth, self-understanding, self-appreciation, self-progress. With these therapeutic overtones, *Harvesting Your Journals* is squarely aligned with the work of Thompson, Rainer, Baldwin, and other advocates of therapeutic journal writing. As mentioned earlier, I find these resources useful, but also limited in their emphasis on individualism and personal progress, while they lack critical consciousness of systemic social forces that interfere with different individuals' personal livelihoods in disproportionate ways depending on their particular social locations and circumstances.

The "Harvest" metaphor also resonates with another sense of Return, that of "the returns" of what you put into journal-keeping: what comes of these practices? What do you get out of it? How does your commitment to—your Keeping of—a journal serve you in return?

What are the returns on this investment? Or what returns in terms of incomplete results—do you read the early returns, as opposed to a final accounting? Do you have many happy returns?

These returns aren't straightforward; in Return one can find satisfaction and frustration alike, whether assessing the journal material as "process" or "product." Kate Thompson relies on this distinction as she introduces therapeutic journal writing: "Therapeutic journal writing," she declares, "is definitely process writing. In its most basic sense this means that the outcome will not be measured by anyone other than the writer. Indeed, journal writing will often not be read or seen by anyone other than the writer and it will not be crafted or edited into a 'finished' piece, or product, at this stage. This may be permission enough for some people to begin journal writing, having freed their thoughts and feelings from potent and limiting earlier preconceptions about what writing 'should' be" (28). Keeping shows up here, as in keeping one's journal contents to oneself. Return comes up specifically in that keeping for oneself entails a measurement of outcomes. For Thompson, the exclusivity of self-assessment would be liberating, freeing. For some keepers of notebooks and sketchbooks who also create "finished" work as writers or artists, however, the line between "process" and "product" is harder to find, and this provokes ambivalence if not anxiety. An illustrator, Peter Arkle, explains that "When I look back through the books I've filled, I usually feel annoyed that there's still so much good stuff in them that is just sitting there having nothing done with it"—implying that this "stuff" is valuable insofar as something could be "done with it" or made of it; its unfinishedness makes it irritating. Then he says: "Sometimes I catch myself laughing at something and realize that it's only funny because it is in an old notebook and that is where it has to stay because it just won't translate to another medium. And then I wonder if anyone will ever even read it again…" (in

Gregory, 16). Joan Didion writes, "On Keeping a Notebook": "We are not talking here about the kind of notebook that is patently for public consumption, a structural conceit for binding together a series of graceful *pensées*; we are talking about something private, about bits of the mind's string too short to use, an indiscriminate and erratic assemblage with meaning only for its maker. And sometimes even the maker has difficulty with the meaning" (136-7).

Return shapes our practices as we keep journals, whether or not we actually will return to those journals in the future. My assumptions regarding whether or how I will or won't return to what I write, or how or when I'll return to it, shapes what and how I write in the present. Keeping—in the sense of maintaining, preserving, or archiving—makes return available as an option; potential or actual return can justify or indicate particular ways of keeping. The idea of returning to this writing in the future can take shape as a ghost of "future-me" looking over my shoulder.[122] I might be writing "for" future me; I explain and gloss terms and contextualize my expressions, so that future-me will understand what I've meant. I do this glossing and contextualizing because I've had the experience of returning to a journal and finding what's written there too cryptic to make sense of place or events or other participants. Didion says "it

[122] The idea of "future ghosts" is from Thich Nhat Hanh's commentary on the Sutra on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone, *Awakening of the Heart*, p. 231.

Related to "ghosts" and the practice of mindfulness while smiling at ghosts (Nhat Hanh): Because I have found that reading my old journals is an emotionally risky project, I need tools, parameters, constraints, containment. My primary strategy for managing the risk of revisiting intensely emotional material from my past is to create what Kate Thompson calls a "feedback loop," which involves reading a piece of journal material and then immediately writing feedback about how that material makes me feel and what it brings to mind in the present. Feedback writing can be initially or primarily a kind of secondary analysis/reflection/interpretation on a piece of primary journal material, but it often becomes its own form of journaling, which opens the possibility of endlessly recursive feedback loops.

"Looking over the shoulder" is also a figure describing the reader's perspective on the material shared by interviewees in Paula W. Graham's *Speaking of Journals*: "This unique book allows readers and aspiring writers to look over the shoulders of more than two dozen successful authors as they work in their journals" (Graham, backmatter).

all comes back"—except when it doesn't. Or when it can't. It can't come back if I haven't kept it. Whether and how it comes back is partly dependent on how I've kept it.

Return in the Classroom

Return is a useful practice for writing as developing complex draft material over time: I illustrate a classroom example of such a return practice in my Conclusion, where I describe an art school writing class's workshop on reading their own journals to gather material to write "artist statements."

As I discuss Expression below, I will describe an example from my own classroom that illustrates how Return (in tandem with Expression) is useful for critical reflection on the meaning-making habits we carry in our everyday lives.

Containment

Containment has to do with demarcations and distinctions of where a journal (or journal practice) begins or ends. It can be a concern with what makes a journal different from a collection of separate documents. For Rick Beerhorst, "[t]he fact that my journal is in book form helps it seem more of a 'place to go to' than loose sheets of paper. The containment of a book seems to have a theme or some kind of a representation of a specific artistic territory. It also seems in kinship with a diary and to represent a particular period of time and life experience" (in Gregory, *An Illustrated Life* 20). Containment here brings to journal practice a sense of containers, enclosures, or boundaries around something. It's about a restraining, binding

energy that confers meaning, a holding-in-place what would otherwise dissipate, becoming nothing in particular.

Containment is a process of intentional holding: holding in, back, or off; holding together, holding steady, holding down. Containment can be about the reduction of harm, a practice of safety or care. In pandemic times, we can think of "stop the spread" as an instruction in containment as collective care, where what's being contained is a crisis-level contagion: in containing the virus we manage it, stop it from growing larger or more complex, prevent it from endangering more lives. Containment can be about simplifying, ordering, slowing a proliferating complexity.

Containment can mean "holding space," or what adrienne maree brown calls "holding change," meaning an intentional practice such as facilitation or mediation that makes a certain kind of interactive or interpersonal process possible, where such processes are understood as necessary for personal and social transformation (*Holding Change*, 7). In other contexts, Containment can be a violent process, a strategy used to maintain a relationship of domination. The line between containment-as-care and containment-as-domination can be a site of struggle, as in rhetorics of incarceration, rehabilitation, and disability justice (access Ben-Moshe). We need to keep this tension between care and violence central to our thinking about Containment as a practice-trope for anti-oppressive journal-keeping.

In journal pedagogies, Containment has to do with how we meet the vulnerability and volatility of journal material. It can be about engaging with that material with care and caution. By "material" here I mean both textual material, the written, drawn, or otherwise composed contents of a journal; and I mean the content of experience. The Buddhist Lama Rod Owens

uses “material” to refer to “expressions of energies that we identify as thoughts and emotions” (*Love and Rage*, 6). For him, meditation practice involves “working with” such material: “anger was really the first material I had to work with, that began my practice” (33). Similarly, journal-keeping is a practice of working with the material of thoughts and emotions; and in doing so it generates textual material. Both senses of material need to be contained, according to Kate Thompson, who explains: “Containment is about providing boundaries and limits to contain the experience of self and emotion. This can be provided by the physical material—the book, the pages, and respect for privacy. The book becomes the container to be put away or brought out when required. The edges of the page become containing limits for the writing which would overflow” (34). A journal can contain uncomfortable states such as ambiguity or indecision and make them more bearable” (31). Containment thus can involve how you organize your engagements with the material of your experience, using the materials of your journal—whether in writing entries, designing the parameters of Exercises or Experiments, or in going about Return practices, e.g., when and how you spend time reading a journal. Much of the advice in Heart and Strickland’s *Harvesting your Journals* can be read as strategies to provide Containment when we Return to our old journals. In these senses, the Containment trope frames the journal itself as container; and in more abstract ways, we can think of the parameters that organize a keeper’s practice—how and when they use their journals, etc.—as doing containment work. Containment here dovetails with an aspect of Keeping as custodianship.

At a wider scope, Containment is about how interpersonal boundaries or community norms guide interactions of multiple people, including keepers and/or others, concerning their

use and treatment of journals. Here Containment is related to Sharing, especially in the question of boundaries and assumptions about who can or might potentially have access to one's journals. The sketchbook artists in *An Illustrated Life* are often concerned about this: Seamus Heffernan writes: "I usually make my sketchbooks with the understanding that people will want to look through them, so I keep anything I wouldn't want people to see out of them" (in Gregory, 79). Christina Lopp: "...when people look through my journal…. I can't just sit there and watch them look through it; it feels too personal, like my internal workings are made visible to people. I find it is easier to have them look without watching them, otherwise I find I am analyzing what they are thinking while they are looking" (152). Noah Z. Jones: "I've never had a problem with anyone looking through my sketchbooks. There's nothing to hide…. I do get a kick on the occasion that someone is flipping through one and starts giggling. However, I've never gone out of my way to share them with people" (112).

As I discuss in detail in my Conclusion, one of our Journal Lab Working Assumptions is that we never touch, photograph, or look through another person's journal without invitation. This Assumption helps Journal Lab feel like a reasonably safe space for people to bring their journals for practice, and maybe for Sharing if they choose to. In Journal Show and Tell, I often think of "Telling" (without Showing, which is allowing others to look directly at pages) as a way of containing, withholding direct access while still sharing something of the journal material.

Experiment

What happens if I try this, or that? Experiment entails a curious disposition, a doing as seeking to find something out, not necessarily knowing what it will be. Experiment is a way of

obtaining new practical knowledge, or new first-hand experience. There's a sense of inquiry and a sense of play in the what-if of Experiment. What if I do it that way? Okay, how about this? Or that way, again? There is a sense of newness and also of repetition: of trying again in a new way, or giving an old way another try. Repetition of trying, with differences in what or how it is that you try. Experimenting means going some way down each (if not every) potential path that presents itself.

The results of any action become data when the action is an experiment. Experiment, like Devices, thus also has close affinities with the rhetoric of invention. There's great value in how Experiment can transform "failure" into "data." But if every action becomes an experiment, the ensuing data can be overwhelming. We may or may not Return to try to make sense of this data later.

Experiment might be a deviation from practices that follow form, engage in conventions, rules, norms, prescriptions. New ways forward, possibilities, believing in a potential value, not known at the beginning, but perhaps to be realized in new ways of doing the practice. At the same time, Experiments might use procedures or protocols, enact certain methods. When we conduct experiments, we might use controls. In following procedures and enacting repetitions, experiment also leans on Exercise.

Experimental procedures can be Devices. We can experiment with different devices. What happens for me if I use this or that device?

There's both an open-endedness of multiple possibilities and a forward driven purposiveness of this trying to find something out. When I practice Experiment, I don't know what will come of it, but it matters to me that I try because I might find something of value.

(Return shows up here, as there might be good returns.) Lynda Barry's approach to drawing, replacing binaristic evaluative judgments that sound like questions ("Is it good? Does it suck?") with a "don't know" attitude, is a powerful example of this.

Experiment emphasizes process because whatever results from the procedure have the value of being data, a source of knowledge or information. We're not aiming for specific known-in-advance results. As we keep trying things out (Experiment also leans on Keeping), our practices continue to evolve.

Marion Milner, a British psychologist, wrote a series of books about her journal experiments, from which I have learned so much more than I have been able to represent in this writing. In *An Experiment in Leisure* (1940), Milner's experimentation is driven by the simple question, "what do I like?" —yet her conclusions end up being not a direct answer to the question itself, but a new ability to experience things and understand experience in new ways. In the book, she shares the insight—not so much of what she learned about herself (which is incidental to her argument) but of the tools and methods she discovered, and how they might be useful to others.

Journal Experiments can take many forms at many scales of practice. Writing an entry in a new way can be an experiment. I've also conducted experiments over longer periods of time, filling a whole volume following specific parameters. In Journal Lab, we conduct "community experiments" where everyone undertakes a particular exercise and compares results together (see my conclusion essay for examples).

Expression

As a practice of expression, journal-keeping involves writing, drawing, or otherwise composing for the purpose of externalizing and concretizing internal experiences, mental and emotional states, perceptions, memories, ideas, and so on. In this pedagogy, I am treating Expression (like the other tropes) as an invitation to *rhetorical practice*, meaning that in using this pedagogy we *use* these tools if or when they are useful (we practice expression), and at the same time we reflexively critique this practice, interrogating the rhetorics or pre-existing systems of power and meaning-making in which our expression practices are embedded. "Expression" signifies a whole rhetoric unto itself, a complex set of ideas about how people create and communicate meaning, and how communication constructs people, in particular contexts. For anti-oppressive purposes, Expression is complicated because the cultural rhetorics of individuality and uniqueness of voice are not equally distributed across categories of difference like race: for example, a white person may be more likely to have their expression heard as a unique "voice" whereas a person of color may be heard as speaking on behalf of a larger collective.[123]

Rhetorics of expression includes ideas of what constitutes an expressive being, subject, or person; and what kind of movement is happening when that subject "expresses" something. Such ideas are central in Kate Thompson's list of "reasons for keeping a therapeutic journal": "Stories can be told and retold *ad infinitum* in a journal"; "A journal helps find a voice and to give voice to the previously unknown, unspeakable or unacknowledged"; "It allows different

[123] I'm drawing here on lots of critiques of expressivist rhetorics in composition studies. Access e.g. Berlin; Tate et al.; Roeder and Gatto.

parts of the self to emerge and step forward from the unconscious"; A journal validates experience—writing it down makes it real and confers existence on the writer. It makes the writer visible" (*Therapeutic Journal Writing*, 30-31).

Expression describes a movement of meaning from "inside" the journal-keeper (e.g., "in your subconscious"), to "outside" them, remediated in the "text" of the journal, whatever form it takes. In some cases, the movement represented as Expression originates not "inside" the singular person necessarily, yet still comes from an "elsewhere" that is removed from present awareness and difficult to access in most circumstances. Lynda Barry, for example, often refers to "the image world"—an ideational and representational dimension reminiscent of the Jungian "collective unconscious"; practitioners should get glimpses of it in the pages of their composition books when they practice using her exercises (*Syllabus*).

The rhetoric of expression also includes ideas about how, by practicing expression, subjects are constituted and individuated as unique beings with their own characteristic expressive styles or "voices." Lynda Barry, *Syllabus* p. 70: Although we all start out by drawing in the same style, something starts to show up pretty quick: our <u>own</u> style. There is a way of making lines and shapes that is ours alone, and the more we draw, the clearer it becomes, not just to ourselves but to others: a style unique and recognizable.… The trick is to find a way to keep ourselves from rejecting it before it can fully present itself" (70). In these examples, there is a shared sense of Expression as being "free" from judgment, censure, or rejection. For Thompson, this freedom is simply given by the practice of keeping a journal, because "a journal will never get bored with your words" (30) and "will not judge what the writer says" (31). For Barry, a uniqueness or authenticity of Expression, a "style," is not easy to achieve because of

how we habitually judge ourselves. In Julia Carson's "morning pages" exercise from *The Artist's Way*, Expression is about getting something out of the way to uncover "your creativity," which according to Cameron everyone has: "Simply put, the morning pages are three pages of longhand writing, strictly stream-of-consciousness…. All that angry, whiny, petty stuff that you write down in the morning stands between you and your creativity. Worrying about the job, the laundry, the funny knock in the car, the weird look in your lover's eye—this stuff eddies through our subconscious and muddies our days. Get it on the page" (10-11).

In what is expressed, there is a complex relationship between qualities of truth, honesty, rawness, or authenticity on the one hand, and the threat of judgment or evaluation. This tension has to do with what makes journal-keeping a personal, vulnerable practice, because dominant cultural practices around writing or composing of any kind lead us to expect that anything we write or make will be subject to evaluation, especially in educational contexts. Keeping, Sharing, and Containment can be about navigating how to make space for the vulnerability of expression where judgments are suspended, whether they would come from others or from oneself.

Expression (and Return) in the Classroom

As a practice for anti-oppressive pedagogy, expression is not just about giving voice to something; it's about making "internal," personal material more available for reflexive critique and examination. Expression is only so useful without *feedback* (a key device and aspect of return practices; it'll come up under both those terms). In representing a movement of meaning, or of meaningful material, from an imperceptible form ("inside," "subconscious,"

"image world," etc.) into a perceptible, legible, mediated form (in the journal), this trope represents a means of gaining transformative access to the meaningful material of our own lives: in other words, it's a way to tap into matrixes of meaning-making, toward reshaping how power circulates.

About a year ago I taught a first-year writing course called "Disability and Representation." I organized the course around three main themes: disability as a critical concept, rhetorical analysis as a critical/argumentative skill, and journal-keeping as a writing process tool. Since my students had all registered for the section some time before I had determined the syllabus, nearly all of them came to the first day of class either unaware or having just learned that I'd be asking them to write about disability. That first day, many of them seemed unsure whether or how this topic would have any relevance to them personally. I had anticipated such assumptions. It reflects the dominant, ableist cultural view of what "disability" refers to: significant physical, mental, or sensory impairment, a condition of body or mind that is only understood in medical terms and that is not desirable and should be cured or prevented if possible. From the critical perspective of disability studies, disability is a complex social and cultural system that governs the relations between bodies, spaces, ability, and value. In systemic terms, everyone has a relationship to disability, or dis/ability, or ableism and disablism. One of my goals for the course was to give students spaces and tools to examine their own relationships to disability.

I ask students to freewrite for five minutes in response to the prompt: "Disability is…" Before they start, I tell them that I will not collect this writing nor ask them to share it with anyone; rather, the point is to externalize and make explicit the ideas they hold, to put their

ideas in a form they can consider and interrogate in conjunction with new information from another source. After students finish writing, before anything else happens I show them Stella Young's short TED Talk "I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much." A comedian and disability rights activist, Young describes the harmful, ableist practice of "inspiration porn," images that represent disabled people as objects of inspiration for non-disabled people. After watching the video, I ask students to write again for a few minutes about how Young's ideas spoke to what they had written in the first freewrite. Finally, I invite students to share their observations verbally in a full-class discussion. Some students say, with interest and discomfort, that in their writing they had expressed the idea that disabled people are inspiring to them, only moments before they heard Stella Young's critique. The exercise gives students critical access to the notions about disability they hold and enables them to investigate those ideas via rhetorical analysis.

Exercise

Exercise is often a basic part of any pedagogy. "Exercises" are common activities in classrooms. An exercise might be about practicing something, like a skill, to build proficiency in it. Exercise blurs the sense of learning with the sense of fitness. In using Exercise as a pedagogical practice-trope, we must be wary of the ableist rhetorics it often carries. Exercise is a way to get fit, to get "in shape." On the soccer team, we'd spend the first two weeks of pre-season doing intense conditioning exercises, sprints and core workouts and long-distance runs. Lynda Barry's *Syllabus* has students start with a series of crayon-coloring exercises, until: "now your hands are ready to go!" —next to a drawing of Batman flexing muscular biceps (101). When we think about using Exercise in our pedagogies, we have to think about how an exercise

may or may not be accessible to particular bodymind capacities: not everyone can hold a crayon.

Exercises for learning are often about simplicity, perhaps breaking a complex activity into simple parts. In this process, Exercise transforms the meaning of actions by leveraging them toward specific purposes. A student who plays the cello told me about the "spider" hand exercises they'd use to build hand strength and dexterity.[124] This exercise turns the motions of the hand into the motion of a walking spider. Exercise can transform a given activity's purpose, giving a point to an otherwise pointless action, or reorientating a familiar action toward a different point. In the 1984 film *The Karate Kid*, home maintenance tasks like waxing cars and painting fences become exercises in martial arts training.

Exercise values repetition of specific action as useful even when it doesn't seem useful at every moment. Such repetitions are typically organized at regular intervals in time, with accumulating benefits over time. This is a common dimension of journal-keeping pedagogies, particularly emphasizing "daily" repetitions. Thompson says that "the idea that you have to write every day" is a "myth" that can be a barrier for some to access journal-keeping. But, she continues: "The journal writing habit has more therapeutic benefit if it is done more often, and if it can be done every day then the benefits increase proportionally" (32). In this example, daily writing exercise isn't a "requirement" but a strongly recommended therapeutic prescription. In Lynda Barry's pedagogy, daily exercises like the "Daily Diary" assignment give students very

[124] A Google search for "cello spider hand exercise" yields many instructional videos demonstrating the practice.

specific instructions with the goal of "noticing what we notice and noticing more" (83); "Your daily diary will teach you to hear, see and remember the world all around you" (61).[125]

There is room for ambiguity in these examples, such as Thompson's acknowledgement that "daily" isn't a strict requirement, but often the idea of regular intervals uses an ableist notion of time, that everyone experiences the passage of time in more or less the same way, which is not the case.[126] Barry frequently emphasizes the importance of taking the right amount of time to achieve the "presence" that her pedagogy is after. "Sometimes," she says, "right before class I'll see students rushing to finish the homework I gave them and I always feel sad. They'll get nothing from the work without the state of mind that comes with it. It's a thing Dan Chaon calls 'dreaming awake'—we can use writing and drawing to get to that state, but not by rushing" (128). Here Barry seems to ignore the pressures on the college students in her class, pressures that may make it impossible for them to take the kind of time she imagines they need to get to the right "state of mind."

I don't know what my students' relationship to time is, but I know it is certainly different from mine. When I ask them to practice journal-keeping as part of their work for my classes, we spend time talking about what "daily" means and asking questions together about what's useful or not, and what's accessible or not, about the idea of a daily writing practice. I have invited students to use Barry's "Daily Diary" format for the first week or two of our class and then to reflect on their experiences with it as data for these conversations.

---

[125] This is also a good example of the Observation practice-trope, which I am starting to notice more as I develop this draft.

[126] Disability theorists use the concept of "crip time" to address this; see e.g. Samuels, "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time."

The Three Exes (Experiment, Expression, Exercise)

To exercise something can be to enact agency or to move something from theory to practice, as in "exercising one's rights." In *Syllabus,* Barry quotes and comments on a line from M.P. Follett's *Creative Experience*: "'Concepts can never be presented to me merely, they must be knitted into the structure of my being, and this can only be done through my own activity.' The only way to understand this is by making things. Thinking about it, theorizing about it, chatting about it will not get you there" (72).

Exercise can also carry a sense of discipline, ritual, and demonstration of achievement or power, as in "military exercises" or "commencement exercises." Often entailing specific directive scripts or instructions, Exercise overlaps with Experiment here. Whereas Experiment uses protocols to produce unknown results (experimenting in order to "find out"), Exercise follows protocols in pursuit of specific expectations or desired results; "getting in shape" presupposes a "shape."

On the other hand, Expression also makes use of Exercise in many journal-keeping pedagogies, but in Expression (as in Experiment) the results are generally not presupposed. Exercise facilitates Expression by being rule driven. In the "List of 100" exercise, for example, "the rules make it simple: repeat, don't censor, don't hesitate, repeat, repeat" (Thompson 93). These instructions emphasize expression as the goal and use repetition and simple rules to reach that goal. Barry's graphic "autobifictionalography" *100 Demons* is based on a painting exercise called "One Hundred Demons" that she found in a book of 16th century Zen art: "She checked out some books, followed the instructions, and the demons began to come. They were

not the Demons she expected. … At first they freaked her, but then she started to love watching them come out of her paint brush. She hopes you will dig these demons and then pick up a paint brush and paint your own!" Barry then provides detailed instructions about materials and techniques for Demon-painting at the end of the book. "There are much better instructions in books on Asian-style brushwork at your library," she writes, "but mostly you can learn a lot by messing around. I write the alphabet every day with a brush" (*100 Demons*, 8-13, 219ff).

Chapter VI. Conclusion:
Transfigurative Access and Journal-Keeping Practice:
Ways Forward in the Writing Classroom

The aim of this final chapter is to suggest how the theories I've developed in this dissertation—the methodologies of practice and tropes, figurative access-questioning, and the constellation of journal-keeping practice-tropes—offer resources that readers may find useful in their own teaching and learning work. How do these concepts change our approaches to teaching and learning practice? This essay showcases tools and approaches to transformative teaching and learning with writing and rhetoric, classroom practices of working critically with meaning-making, toward anti-oppressive values. Since I imagine these tools and approaches will be taken up in institutional contexts, and recognizing how deeply these contexts are structured by what bell hooks calls "dominator thinking," this essay meditates on the possibilities of doing such liberatory pedagogical practices of critical meaning-making given the institutional contexts we find ourselves in.

I want to start by reflecting on my experiences and experiments with journal-keeping pedagogy in relation to my teaching and organizing at the University of Michigan. Continuing the story told in my Introduction, of how my personal experiences of journal-keeping in and through classroom life led to this project, here I describe more details about my experiences in keeping and sharing journal practices with other practitioners, whether my peers or my

students, within the context of higher education. The centerpiece of this reflection is Journal Lab, a workshop model that I co-created with Pau Nava. I'll describe how the idea of Journal Lab emerged in conversations with Pau; then our collaborative efforts to put Journal Lab into practice with a small community of participants; and finally, my solitary attempts to use Journal Lab as a model to practice journal-keeping pedagogy in my own classrooms. In bringing Journal Lab into the classroom as a "holistic" model I encountered difficulties that, upon reflection, give insight into how we can practice using teaching tools as figurative access devices, in a less holistic and linear, and more iterative, nonlinear, piecemeal fashion. That is, ultimately Journal Lab is best understood as a shifting assemblage of many different elements (ideas, practice-tropes, working assumptions), not a singular framework that works the same way in all contexts.

I'll end by meditating on some of my most recent approaches to teaching first-year writing with journal-keeping as a central component of the course. I first consider my assessment practices and then how I have tried to facilitate student efforts to keep journals, and I suggest ways that these practices would change now based on the theories put forward in this project.

Journal Lab: A Queer Community Pedagogy

Journal Lab emerged from my collaboration with Pau Nava, a queer Chicanx artist and scholar and fellow doctoral student at UM (in American Culture). Pau and I came up with the idea of Journal Lab together, as we were getting to know each other in the summer and fall of 2017. At the time, I was still just beginning to conceptualize a dissertation about journal-

keeping, and I was conducting my first experiments of journal-keeping pedagogy, as a teaching assistant in two disability studies and rhetoric courses with my mentor Remi Yergeau (as described in my Introduction). Pau was the first person that I'd known to have a passion for journal-keeping that rivals mine. Starting early in our friendship, we compared practices, learned new methods from each other, shared stories about our experiences with journals and all we've gained from the practice as fellow queer scholar-artists committed to transformative work. We shared a recognition of the deep vulnerability that journal-keeping and other personal creative-reflective practices entail, and we've approached all our conversations with appropriate care, recognizing further how thoroughly our normative learning spaces fail to honor and nurture that vulnerability. We created Journal Lab to be a community of practice for keeping and sharing journals, and a refuge from the judgmental and evaluative norms of creative and rhetorical practice in the institutionalized worlds we currently inhabit as scholars.

We launched Journal Lab as an "Interdisciplinary Workshop" group funded by the Rackham Graduate School at UM. In our first grant proposal, we described Journal Lab as "an ongoing series of facilitated meetings where participants can informally workshop and develop their own journal-keeping practices, learn and share new techniques, and reflect together on the many effects and uses of journaling." We openly invited all "UM students, instructors, staff, and community members who share an interest in journal-keeping." The workshop initially had four guiding themes, exploring journaling as creative cultural practice, as research method, as a pedagogical tool, and as an activist resource.

Figure 2. Four Guiding Themes of Journal Lab RIW [2018]

- **Journaling as a creative cultural practice.** We will maintain a stimulating workshop space for creativity, art-making, expressive writing, et cetera, making space for expression and creative play

for everyone, regardless of major field of study or professional background. We believe a journaling workshop can build community and support mental health by promoting an expressive and creative learning culture.

- **Journaling as a method of research and inquiry.** This workshop will also be a purposive space for those interested in using journaling as a form of qualitative research about cultural practices and systems. More broadly, we believe a journaling workshop can support the ongoing work of individual researchers using a wide range of methods.
- **Journaling as a pedagogical tool.** "Low-stakes" writing is a common pedagogical method for composition. We are also interested in other pedagogical uses for journaling: for instance, as a method for students to explore questions deeply, connecting curricular issues to personal experiences, or to track their own learning over time. Our workshop will be a laboratory for instructors who want to experiment with journaling techniques they might bring into their teaching.
- **Journaling as an activist resource.** Our political and academic investments in anti-oppressive work in the humanities and cultural studies lead us to position this workshop as an activist space. Journaling can be an effective tool for understanding one's position in social systems and institutions of power. Journaling can also cultivate a private space of resistance and self-empowerment. We commit our workshop to increase support for marginalized members of our campus community and to work toward institutional and cultural change.

Journal Lab's community of practitioners

We didn't keep consistent records of what happened in our Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshop (RIW) meetings, because it was important to us that we maintain an environment as free from surveillance as possible. It was meant to be an ephemeral space for participants to play and experiment with the materials and ideas we all brought into the room, and to make their own decisions about what to keep. I kept some things—my own notes on our conversations, and the results of experiments that we did in Lab. Looking through my journals

and computer files, I find a few such items that help me describe what happened with this community of practitioners at UM, in 2018 and 2020.

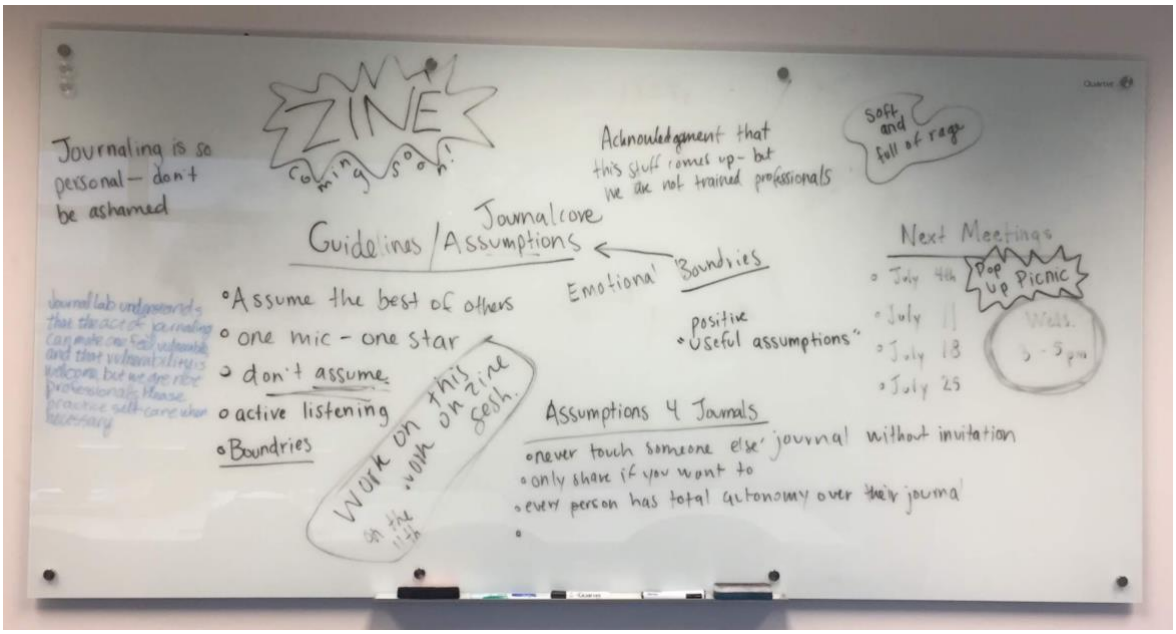
Pau and I organized meetings on UM Central Campus a handful of times in the Winter semester of 2018, from January to April, and a few more during that summer, in July and August. Pau spent the '18-19 year in Chicago, and the Journal Lab RIW went on hiatus during that time. We returned for a few more meetings in January and February 2020, before the COVID-19 lockdowns. Altogether, we held perhaps 15 meetings averaging about five or six participants at each, ranging from one (aside from Pau and myself) to ten at most. True to our hopes, those in attendance included undergrad and grad students, faculty, and staff from many different quarters of the University including the Law School, College of Engineering, Schools of Social Work and Education, Stamps School of Art and Design, and numerous departments of LSA. Some people attended only once, some a couple of times; a small few became committed regulars.

Assumptions and expectations for participant interactions

We always tried to be very thoughtful about the assumptions and expectations we held regarding our interactions with each other around the sensitive and vulnerable matter of our journals. We had regular discussions of these assumptions, as captured on the whiteboard in the photograph below, from one of our summer 2018 meetings. The notes on the board include phrases like "Journaling is so personal—don't be ashamed"; "soft and full of rage"; "emotional boundaries." We distinguished between expectations regarding journals ("never touch someone else's journal without invitation"; "only share if you want to") and those regarding

how we would treat each other ("active listening," "assume the best of others," "don't assume"). There are also notes here indicating our intention (not yet realized) to create a zine that describes and explains the guiding assumptions for Journal Lab interactions.

Figure 3. Image of a whiteboard with handwritten notes about guidelines and assumptions for Journal Lab interactions (photograph by author)



These conversations developed into a set of "Working Assumptions" that guided our last few meetings in early 2020.

Figure 4. Working Assumptions for Journalcore Community Spaces, Journal Lab Feb. 2020 draft

[with minor revisions for this essay]

In Journal Lab, we experiment with how to engage in community around forms of expression and record-keeping that are deeply personal and often very private. From experience, we know these tools can be transformative. We want to learn from each other's practices while honoring their vulnerability and respecting each person's boundaries. In our commitment to cultivating an accessible and generative space for all Lab participants, we work from the following assumptions:

Journal Lab Is Not a Clinical or Disciplinary Space

- The act of journaling can make one feel vulnerable, and that vulnerability is welcome, but Journal Lab is not therapy, and our facilitators are not health professionals. Please practice self-care when necessary.

- We ask any institutional "mandated reporters," or others who have similar responsibilities, to self-identify before any sharing begins.

We Each Take Care of Ourselves

- You have total autonomy over your own journal.
- You determine how you participate in this space.
- All prompts, activities, and experiments are "opt-in."
- Inhabit the space according to your needs: feel free to come and go, get up, move around, sit or lie on the floor, stim, bring in food or drink.
- During Journal Show and Tell or open discussions, be mindful of your own needs and limits, and only share from your own practice in ways that feel comfortable to you in the moment.

We All Take Care with Each Other

- When you are sharing your personal material, be mindful of how it may be received by others and offer content or trigger warnings as appropriate.
- When listening to others, always honor the risk that people take by sharing personal material which may be vulnerable.
- Be generous and thoughtful in responding to what others have shared. Avoid giving advice or critical feedback without invitation.
- Never touch, look inside, or photograph someone else's journal without clear invitation.

Journal Show and Tell

One of the most important and exciting parts of every meeting was "Journal Show and Tell," a practice of Sharing in which participants could choose to describe their personal journal practices to those present, sometimes reading excerpts, sometimes showing us images or pages. These were powerful interactions, and I did not usually take notes about them, as a way of honoring their vulnerability. Sharing would happen in more informal ways as well, but the ritual of Journal Show and Tell constituted an important foundation for the space as a whole.

It's hard to describe how radically different these Show-and-Tell interactions were from other scholarly conversations that I've experienced in the institutional spaces of higher

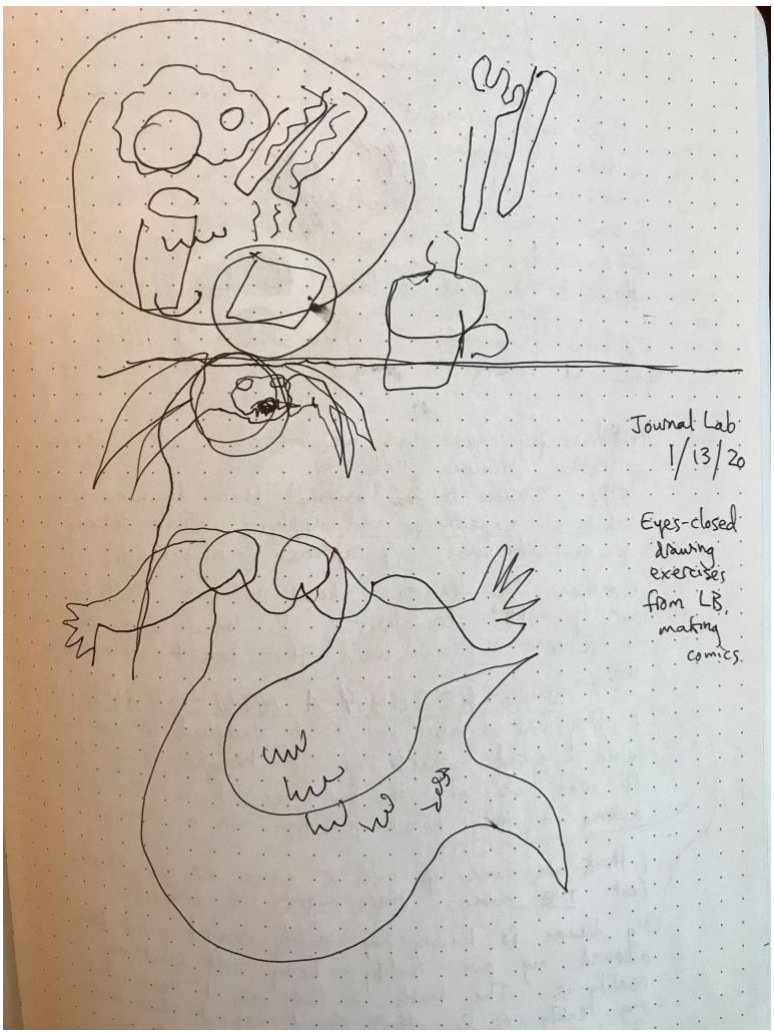
education. In other "RIW" spaces I visited or facilitated, for instance, conversations were usually oriented toward particular established or developing fields of academic work; participants would read and discuss articles, books, and other forms of published scholarship in the field(s) of the groups focus; we would workshop drafts of papers, articles, dissertation or book chapters to help their authors (fellow grad students, or sometimes visiting junior faculty) prepare their work for submission to some evaluating authority—journal editor, publisher, conference committee, dissertation advisor, et cetera. Making professional scholarly products usually felt like the dominant motivation, the main reason for being there, whether the product was the draft in question or the participants' own training objectives. That is, grad students who showed up to a chapter draft workshop in the Disability Studies Group RIW (for instance) generally acknowledged that their reason for attending was related to their training (for prelims, or dissertation work) in Disability Studies fields. In Journal Lab, especially during Show and Tell, the rhetoric of institutional professionalism felt almost beside the point. People came to Journal Lab for many reasons: some were passionate journal-keepers already and wanted to connect with like-minded others; others had a little experience with journal-keeping and wanted support in deepening their practice. Some were less interested in journaling specifically but were drawn to the space for a different kind of creative engagement than they were used to in academic spaces. Others understood that we were centering queer and trans community and came mainly for that reason.

Journal Lab Experiments

We practiced Experiment and Exercise together in a variety of ways. Sometimes, one of us brought in an exercise for us to try individually, and we would discuss our results together.

Here's an example, prompted by an exercise in Lynda Barry's book *Making Comics*. The image shows a page of my journal with some contour line drawings that I made with my eyes closed: the upper third of the page is a drawing of "breakfast" (eggs, bacon, and toast on a plate, a coffee cup, silverware); below that is a "mermaid" (head floating disconnected from torso, face a compressed grimace).

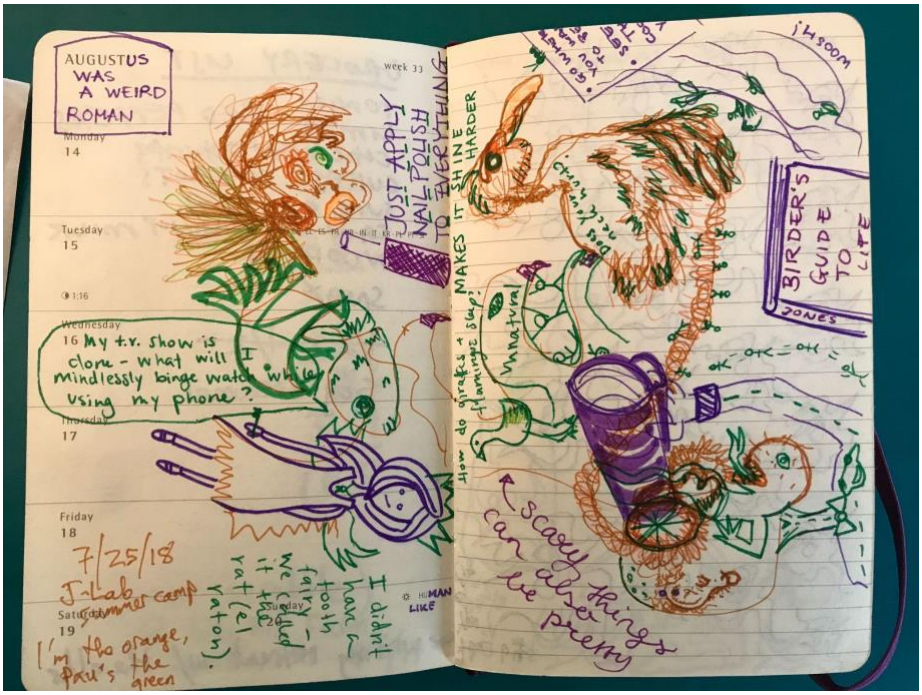
Figure 5. Example of a Journal Lab individual experiment (drawing by author)



At other times, our experiments emerged from ideas we came up with together in our conversations. For example, in one meeting we were (as I wrote in my journal) "Experimenting w/ Astrology prompts—from a lesson plan for English language learners Pau found online." Taurus (my sun sign) being described as "jealous and possessive," I took this phrase and wrote: "I am jealous and possessive in how I want to do things my own way in my own time. My way is the RIGHT way—let me do it! This is one I feel the truth of… when I try to follow others' ways."

Some of our experiments were more collaborative still, involving two or more participants drawing and/or writing on the same page or in the same journal. This drawing experiment, for example, involved three of us, each doodling in our own journals, then swapping journals and doodling further on top of each other's doodles, then swapping again, and so on. Each of us used one distinct color so that at the end we might know who made which marks. In this image, a confused array of faces, figures, and creatures are drawn in orange, green, and purple pen, with words written around them, all spread across two pages of a small Moleskine planner.

Figure 6. Example of a Journal Lab community experiment (drawing and writing by author and two other participants)



At the bottom left of the image is a note in my handwriting: "7/25/18 J-Lab summer camp [;] I'm the orange, Pau's the green." The purple lines were made by a third participant not named. My favorite part of this experiment is the figure in the lower-left quadrant, composed of an

orange squiggle, to which the third participant added purple lines to form a person with long hair wearing a dress; to which Pau added wings, a crown, and the note: "I didn't have a tooth fairy—we called it the rat (el raton)."

We also created some larger-scale "community experiments" including a "Traveling Journal" to be passed from one participant to another, who could each use it as they saw fit (it was lost before we saw it travel very far); and a "Journal-thon" event where we challenged participants to fill an entire small notebook, however they wanted, within 24 hours.

Such practices of experimentation are vitally useful in bringing journal pedagogy into the classroom. When asking students to practice journal-keeping as a part of coursework, we can encourage them to approach the task of journal-keeping in an experimental mindset of "try something and see what happens." We're not looking for a particular result; all results are useful; the trying—the practice—is what we're trying to teach. What happens if you keep a journal? What does journal-keeping mean in the context of a day, a week, a semester? How is your journal writing different from other writing you do?

Journal Lab as a holistic model?
Reflection on a guest-teaching experience

I have at times conceived of Journal Lab as a holistic and portable "model" that could be brought into existing pedagogical frameworks or spaces. I have practiced in this way both in "my own classrooms,"[127] where I have taught first-year writing (FYW) and in my teaching assistantships in English and in Women's and Gender Studies (WGS); and also as a guest

[127] Refer to my Introduction for discussion of "classroom" tropes including the idea of a teacher's "own classroom."

presenter in classes taught by friends at colleagues at UM and at other institutions. As such I have experienced both some affordances and some pitfalls of Journal Lab as a practice-trope for classroom engagement in a variety of college contexts.

My first-year writing syllabus includes a "daily journal practice" assignment and dedicates several class sessions throughout the term to what I call "Journal Lab days." In these sessions I invite students to experiment with various journal-keeping devices and prompts that I provide. I also invite students to share with the class about their practice in a Journal Show-and-Tell, modeled on the practice we developed in the Journal Lab RIW. Sometimes students share techniques or devices of their own invention, or that they had learned elsewhere. When this happens, we can take that device and experiment with it together. Journal Lab days are also dedicated time to talk about what the "daily journal practice" is about, to have open discussion about what's difficult and what's useful about practicing journal-keeping.

I also held "Journal Lab days" in my discussion sections of Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies (Fall 2019), but they played a different role because students weren't strictly required to practice journal-keeping, as in my first-year writing class; rather, I offered journal-keeping an option among others that students could choose for "reflective practice" credit. Whereas in FYW we had four Journal Lab days throughout the term, in WGS we had only two. And since not all my WGS students had chosen journaling for their reflective practice work, these sessions were also geared toward ideation for the course's final zine project, so that they would be relevant to everyone in terms of course requirements.

My thinking about Journal Lab as a stable, portable "model" crystalized through my participation in the Emerging Scholarship Conference at UM in May 2019. At this conference I

presented a workshop for teachers where participants could experiment with some journal devices and get hands-on practice and feedback in designing some of their own exercises for writing about power and meaning-making.[128] In a sense, the workshop was an attempt to distribute my "model" to other teachers who could take it into their own contexts.

More recently, I have become hesitant to define such a model in holistic terms. Since journal practice is so personal; since the exchanges of Show and Tell, and the discussions about journals, in Lab spaces are so ephemeral; and recognizing that the power of Lab is partly in community practice as refuge from expectations of "productivity" as an evaluative measure, I suspect that pursuing a singular model might be using another object-oriented logic to flatten the complex, contextual specificities of journal-keeping work.[129] The theories I've developed in this dissertation point toward a more flexible, iterative, piecemeal approach involving shifting assemblages of devices according to widely divergent needs and applications.

A recent guest-teaching experience brought to light some crucial limitations of my holistic-model thinking about bringing Journal Lab into classrooms. Allie Hirsch is a novelist and writing teacher at the Stamps School of Art and Design at U. Michigan. Allie invited me in December 2021 to give a lesson to undergrad students on reading their own journals. The class was an upper-level seminar on professional art/design writing, required for Stamps students, where students practice writing in the genres they may need to navigate careers as professional artists and designers: "artist/designer statements," art reviews and commentaries, and

[128] It was in developing the material for this workshop that I first clarified the distinction between prompts and devices, and the examples of this that I discuss in my Journal-Keeping Practice-Tropes essay section on Devices.

[129] Recalling here, as I discussed in "Methodology of Practice," that following both critical disability studies methodology (Minich; Schalk and Kim) and cultural rhetorics approaches (Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab) means shifting away from object-oriented thinking toward more contextually situated, reflexive thinking that pays attention to process.

research-writing for art/design project development. In Allie's class, students keep "process journals" throughout the semester in which they regularly respond to specific prompts (which Allie creates), examining their closely held ideas about art and design, earlier experiences with making things and significant feedback they've received on their making, particular art/design objects that have been important to them, their presently unfolding experiences in art/design school, and more. The journals are not to be read by anyone but the keepers, but students do talk about what they've written, in a class discussion format similar to Journal Lab's Show and Tell. One of Allie's purposes in designing this process journal assignment is to have students generate material all semester long that they will then be able to draw on as they write their "artist/designer statements" at the end of the term. Allie asked me to help their students begin the process of reviewing their process journals and "harvesting" such material (Heart and Strickland). In terms of the practice-tropes of journal-keeping, this workshop would be about practicing Return.

In my opening presentation, I shared with the class a bit of background about the previous iterations of Journal Lab, and I expressed an intention that this workshop be an extension of that work. I explained that the goal of Journal Lab is to cultivate experimentation, sharing, and a supportive creative community around journal-keeping practice as a refuge from usual academic evaluative norms of scholarship. A key assumption here is that all participants in Journal Lab bring their own concepts of journal-keeping and their own experiences with personal writing and creative practices, and these experiences shape what is possible in Lab interactions. To tap into their own such ideas and experiences, I invited students to write and then share about "times when you have read your own writing and had memorable feelings

about it.… The point here is to prepare yourself emotionally by opening your attention to some of the ways that reading your own writing can be a complicated matter." Most students chose not to share with the class what came up for them as they wrote, which felt disappointing to me, even though a few students did speak about a range of strong feelings including embarrassment, pleasure, sadness, nostalgia about their old writing.

One problem here is that in imposing the framework of Journal Lab, I was asking students to play a role as autonomous participants in a creative community, that was at odds with their role as students in a required course. People who participate in the Journal Lab meetings that Pau and I organize choose to attend based on an interest in what Journal Lab is about. These students were present because they were in attendance at a class session, fulfilling a requirement within a system of institutionalized rewards that condition access to resources (opportunities, careers, etc.); their autonomy in participating was thus more restricted than in our regular Journal Lab spaces. Also, in our reflections on the workshop, Allie and I concurred that students might have felt more comfortable sharing in a small-group discussion (a routine practice in this class) rather than going straight from freewriting to full-class sharing, which was not something they had practiced before in this context. I was an unfamiliar authority asking them to make a vulnerable performance in an unfamiliar format. This may have been an inaccessible interaction for many of these students.

As we shifted to the next activity, which had students begin reviewing their process journals, I offered several metaphors (or figurative access devices) that they might use to conceptualize this task: mining, harvesting, using a metal detector, gathering clay to make a piece of ceramic art. Here is the script I wrote for this part of the workshop:

> My dad's friend Walter is a ceramic artist. When I was growing up, my siblings and I would sometimes get to work with clay in Walter's studio, and he even taught us how to use his pottery wheel. I remember once he brought the wheel to a craft fair in a park in our small town. There was a river running through the park and he showed us how to gather clay from the riverbank, and then we tried (not very successfully) to make pots out of it. I'm telling this story because it's the background of what is now one of my most reliable metaphors for part of my writing process. For me, coming up with the material for a draft is like gathering clay from the river. When you're at the side of the river with your hands in the earth, what you're looking for isn't a finished piece of ceramic art, you're looking for a certain kind of raw material. You use your senses to judge whether the material you encounter has potential to be shaped into something else, and you gather a whole bunch of it, probably a lot more than the mass of a finished piece. There are many steps after gathering your raw clay before you get to something that looks like a finished piece. The finished piece, your artist's statement, is on the horizon; your river (your journal) is in front of you; you're looking for workable clay.
>
> In this experiment, you're going to start looking over your journal entries and marking them up. Try to do this with a spirit of openness and curiosity, not looking for anything specific, but looking for what's here, with your senses alert to anything that might catch your attention, anything worthy of further investigation. Mark them up: circle things, add stickers or post-its, write annotations. As you annotate, I recommend using different colors of writing utensil than you used to write the entries, if you have options available. I call this "feedback": notes on the dialogue between your initial journal-writing and your reading self now.
>
> Lots of different metaphors might be helpful here. Imagine that your journal is a sandy beach, and you are going over it with a metal detector. When the detector beeps, it might be something interesting, or it might be junk. You're not necessarily sorting the good stuff from the junk yet; you're just flagging the things that make your detector go off. It's likely that each journal passage that catches your attention may appear completely unrelated to the last. This is a good thing—it means you're keeping your attention wide. Mark all of them!
>
> Try to go quickly and stay relatively close to the surface of your writing as you read. This is an initial survey. You can write some notes about your impressions if you want, but don't dig too deep at any one place; you'll be able to go back later.

After the workshop, I reflected on the metaphor of "journal-mining" and other devices that Allie and I used: sparks, heat, clay-gathering, harvesting, metal detector. Each device highlights a particular element of the Return practice. Some of these devices represent a

certain state of attention and responsiveness as you look for what's there using all your senses: not just physical ones, but also intuition, imagination, cognitive and emotional senses.

The clay-gathering device figures the journal as a river, and the Return practice as entering that river to collect material from it to use in making something new. It connects to another device I've thought about in studying my own journals: the current. We can follow currents running through all our work, and these currents exhibit certain (not necessarily linear) relations to time and space. And the current of our lives, how we story them, how we use story to situate our experience in time and in relation to others, whether or not we write down or otherwise archive that story.

After class, Allie and I discussed it and agreed: the first exercise, asking students to reflect on their general experiences of reading their own writing, was too broad, its usefulness unclear for the purpose of the artist statement task. Given the opportunity to do this workshop again, instead of a writing exercise about reading one's own writing generally, I would prompt a brief discussion on the topic and then use a writing exercise to set intentions on the horizon-purpose (artist's statement), and then to get in the open-attention frame of mind, to "tune your metal detector." While a holistic Lab framework wasn't as useful in this context, it is possible to use figurative access devices and practice-tropes to flexibly adapt to the needs and goals of the participants in the room.

Assessment and journal-keeping in college first year writing

At the end of "The Question of Figurative Access," I asserted that access devices function rhetorically as well as materially in the ways they affect access. Accordingly, the concept of an

“access device” lends itself to tropings that enable us to ask questions of access about any tool or technology that affects relations between bodies, spaces, and ideas. I’m thinking here about what this means for teaching tools such as a syllabus, an assignment, or an evaluation; I want us to rigorously examine all such tools in terms of how they affect access. As I’ve shown in many examples, creating access to something for someone may also inhibit access for someone else or to something else. We can use figurative access questioning to reveal how our teaching tools affect such potentially helpful and/or harmful shifts.

Such questioning also calls attention to our practices with those devices. It's important to be curious about our syllabus practices and the values that they uphold. A syllabus is an access device and using it is a matter of practice. Who gets access to what in the use of a syllabus? As a collection of teaching materials and instructions, a syllabus can facilitate collective learning on a given topic. Recent social justice movements have made good use of this function of the syllabus practice-trope through social media collaborations, as in the cases of #FergusonSyllabus (2014) or #StandingRockSyllabus (2016). From a teacher’s perspective, the syllabus for a course contains all the basic information and “policies” about that course, providing a shared map of where the participants will be going together. It may specify procedures for engagement, a schedule of activities, logistical details of where and when. In short, a syllabus is meant to help everyone access all parts of the class, telling students where to be at what times with what preparation.

For a teacher who also has other responsibilities besides their teaching, or who teaches multiple courses, the syllabus can also be a time-saving device. When students ask logistical questions, teachers can direct them to the syllabus to find answers. Anecdotally I know that

many teachers urge students to consult the syllabus before bringing their questions to the teacher's attention. Some teachers express frustration that students don't read the syllabus, saying, "If they would just read the syllabus, they wouldn't have to keep bothering me with these basic logistical questions." We could think of such student questions as a barrier to the instructor's access to other matters important to them.

From a student's perspective, however, a syllabus may not create access so straightforwardly; an expectation that students should just know what's in the syllabus may not be realistic for all students. For instance, a lot of scholarship on the experiences of first-generation college students, and those from working-class backgrounds (categories that may overlap but are certainly not identical), suggests that unfamiliarity with academic genres like syllabi can present difficulties that teachers might not anticipate, so that the syllabus is not as straightforward a relay of information as the teacher might hope (Housel and Harvey; Hurst).

Other access problems arise around syllabus "Accessibility Statements." These are brief statements often included on syllabi (in the U.S., they are federally required by the Americans with Disabilities Act) about addressing barriers to participation for disabled students. Disability studies scholars have criticized such statements that merely instruct students to direct their access concerns through institutional bureaucracies, like the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office at my university (Wood and Madden).

When I last taught first-year writing (FYW) in the fall of 2018, I provided syllabus materials not in the form of a single document that we would review together once at the beginning of term, but rather in an online network of shared course materials (I used a Google Drive folder and set of interlinked Docs as well as a Canvas site) that we would engage with

together throughout the semester. These documents include a detailed explanation of "Work Expectations and Terms of Assessment" that describes my approach to grading in the course and provides a single overview of all assignments (discussed more below); and guidance for starting and maintaining a journal-keeping practice.

My FYW syllabus materials also included a document of "Policies," including those provided by the university regarding Academic Misconduct/Plagiarism and Sexual Misconduct, and others I'd written myself regarding "Electronic Devices in the Classroom" (emphatically allowed, in a context of reflection and dialogue about what participation means for people of varying access needs), as well as my email and office hours practices. I would write this document differently now, with less emphasis on "Policy" and more on "Practices," especially regarding electronic devices and my email/office hours, because I want to think about ways to engage students actively in critical reflection on those practices, rather than offering mandates about them.

"Terms of Assessment," or, How will we handle grading?

My "Terms of Assessment" document is an expression of my firm rejection of the practice of grading or evaluating written products based on judgments of quality. Not only does grading rely on biased assessments that disproportionately harm marginalized students, as much scholarship has shown (e.g., Inoue; Shor). I also have felt for some time, both in my own teaching and in consultation with other instructors, that grades foster mistrust and suspicion between students and teachers, and that they alienate students from the value of their learning by encouraging them to value only the achievement of a grade. Yet I have developed my

practice in the context of an elite university where most students feel very strongly about the importance of getting good grades, and I feel it is my job to take those feelings seriously even if I am critical of the systems that fuel them. Students face punitive realities when it comes to the impact of grades upon access to financial aid, desired majors, stigma, and more. Also, as a student instructor myself, my opportunity to work with such students has been contingent on my acting as an agent of the institution's grading practices. I have sought a practice whereby I could provide students with course grades based on their engagement in our work together while not qualitatively assessing the work they produced. "Contract grading" was my initial model for this practice,[130] but I hesitate to identify my approach with this term because I don't have students sign an actual "contract" (their enrollment in the course is contract enough for me) and the final grade they receive is a representation less of having fulfilled a predetermined number of requirements than of an ongoing assessment that students and I make together in dialogue. What and how and when and where students learn, and how they recognize and articulate their learning, is all so variable that I try to remain open to all the ways they might communicate that learning to me.

In my "Terms of Assessment," I explain to students my rationale for this unconventional approach to grading by relaying the anti-oppressive critiques other scholars have made of standard assessments, and then by describing how my past experiences with teaching at Michigan have led me to my present approach:

[130] In "contract grading," students commit to producing a certain quantity of ungraded work during the term in exchange for their final course grade, based on "effort." Some approaches specify different contracts based on whether students are aiming for a C, B, or A in the course. Shor, Elbow and Danielewicz, and Inoue were my first models of contract grading. I have also learned a lot about the practice from my UM colleagues Ali Shapiro, April Conway, Lauren Eriks Cline, and Allie Hirsch.

> When I've graded essays in the traditional way, students have approached writing tasks as an effort to do it "the right way," which they imagined as producing exactly the thing I wanted to see; when in fact there was no such singular thing, and what I think is "right" wasn't necessarily going to be useful for students' developing writing skills. We'd spend more energy on figuring out the requirements of the grading rubric than on practicing the skills and developing stronger processes of writing. I understand that grades are important; they are a necessary currency for academic and professional mobility in our culture. However, writing skills are also important and I believe that the way to improve your writing is not through having it graded but by spending time repeatedly practicing the acts of putting your words down before readers and listening to how they respond.

According to my "Terms of Assessment" document, course grades will be based not on *quality of written work* (by which I mean the quality of final drafts) but on

> the extent and quality of your labor engaging with 1) the ongoing work of practicing and improving your writing skills, and supporting your peers in their labor; and 2) the conversations of the class, including course readings and the work of your peers both in discussion and in their writing.

I would now reject two aspects of this framing of assessment: its emphasis on "labor" and its uncritical use of a "conversations" metaphor to structure engagement. My use of "labor" here was informed by Asao B. Inoue's approach to assessing "quantity of labor" rather than quality of products. Inoue's focus on "labor" is problematic because he uses a normative, ableist understanding of time as the basis for calculating quantities of labor: "Labor is a more equitable and fair measure [than 'so-called quality']. Everyone has 24 hours in every day" (*Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies* 84). In a footnote he acknowledges that "many students work outside of school, take care of family members, and have other constraints on their time, so not all students have the same amount of free time" (304n24). He then suggests that such differences can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. There's a problematic binary in labeling "working" and "free" time. I leaned on this binary thinking in my 2018 first-year writing (FYW)

course when I asked students to practice keeping a "labor log." The idea was to encourage students to keep an account of their "quantities of labor" to inform our assessment conversations:

> The labor log should be where you record all the tasks you do for class, the time spent on them, and any observations about how it felt to complete them. Writing your labor log need only take a minute or two after you're done doing your 124 homework for the day.

I made several assumptions here about how students situate their work for my class in relation to time: in one sitting, on a "daily" basis. This thinking flattens all students' experiences of labor as equivalent with regard to time (some just have more demands on their time than others). Such ableist thinking ignores how dis/ability, neurotype, chronic illness and pain, trauma, and mental illness all affect not only how much time it takes to perform any given task but also how one perceives, conceptualizes and communicates about their experience of time, making "negotiations" within a fixed, singular notion of time (the teacher's) basically impossible.

The problem with my "conversations" metaphor is that in leaning heavily and uncritically on the "classroom" trope it imposes a singular "project" toward which students' engagement should be guided, rather than opening critical space for students to question and articulate intentions and values of their own. Later in "Terms of Assessment" I explain that "conversations" is a shorthand for "the project of our collective learning about writing":

> For our purposes, I ask you to think of all the work of the class—reading, journal entries, drafting essays, giving peer feedback, revisions, presentations, office hours and conferences, in-class discussion and canvas forum or blog posts—as ways of participating or engaging in the project of our collective learning about writing. This is a large collaborative project involving nineteen contributors (one instructor, eighteen students). The goals of this project are, in a general sense, to improve your writing, reading, revision, and critical thinking skills for use in future academic and real-world contexts. Each of you plays an important role in this collaborative project; each of you is in a position to make significant

> contributions to its outcomes for everyone. Your work will be guided by my instructions for assignments with your reflective input. Procedures for assignments will be quite detailed. But it is ultimately up to you to determine the form and extent of your contributions, according to your own means, learning and access needs, interests, effort, and motivation.

Reading this now I notice that I've leaned heavily on "the classroom" trope that I discussed in my Introduction essay, particularly in the phrase "future academic and real-world contexts" (separating classwork from "real life" in the future) and in the assumption of designated roles for instructor and student ("your work will be guided by my instructions"; students as the target of "improve[ment]"). In the goal to "improve your writing, reading, revision, and critical thinking skills" I'm drawing on the "learning goals" furnished by the English Department Writing Program that administers this course at Michigan.

In another iteration of this course, I would continue to practice the institutional authority as an instructor to specify "procedures" for student engagement, while soliciting regular feedback and dialogue from students about those instructions. But I would want to find ways to prompt more critical questioning of the values motivating this engagement. Rather than focusing on "labor" and using the metaphor of participation in a conversation, I would teach the concept of practice, as I've developed it in this dissertation. Assigned readings about practice from the Black Feminist and Buddhist teachers I've referenced could help students understand and use it as a personal, reflexive frame of reference that contains aspects of self-assessment that can be made explicit in dialogue. Along with this, I would clarify what I've called "the conversations of the class" by talking instead about intentional engagement in the work of learning through practice and reflection. This would require asking students to think critically about what intentions and values guide their work, their showing up and performing

the tasks assigned, to question where those intentions come from and how they align with values that students themselves hold.

As a model of what this reflective practice might look like, I could offer the "mindful engagement" practices that I have developed in the last two years of writing this dissertation. I used to think about my dissertation work in product-focused terms of "getting writing done," by which I meant how many words or pages of an audience-oriented draft I was able to produce. In such terms, if I wasn't cranking out paragraphs, I wasn't "really getting anything done." This thinking erased and devalued vastly significant portions of my process that include forms of thinking, feeling, reading, reflecting, and ideating that are difficult or impossible to quantify. I have instead shifted to thinking of my dissertation as a space made up of a collection of materials, including materials of my own making (drafts, notes, ideas) and materials of my research (other authors' work, books, articles; pieces of discourse or text or tropes that I want to examine); and I now think of my work practice as intentionally engaging with these materials whether or not the engagement produces a particular quantity of "draft" material. I have accomplished this shift in my thinking and self-talk about my work using a journal dedicated to my dissertation work, in which I do a "check-in" and "check-out" exercise as I begin and end each work session. "Checking in" involves reflecting on my present state of body, heart, and mind; assessing my workspace and tidying or setting things up as needed for the current task; and writing out my intentions for the present engagement. "Checking out" means responding in writing, however brief (sometimes just a word), to three prompts: 1) What happened during this engagement/session? 2) How did it feel? 3) What comes next?

Also crucial for structuring this practice was the support of regular conversations with Max, my "dissertation doula" (whom I mentioned in my Introduction). A day or so before our weekly meeting, I would write to him reviewing the week in terms of specific intentions that I had articulated in our previous meetings, or in terms of what happened each day of that week, or in some other way reflecting my current emotional and mental state regarding my dissertation. He would not respond to these directly, but he would refer to my emails in setting an agenda for our subsequent conversation.

In this practice, two elements, my personal journaling about my dissertation process (check-in and check-out) and my email reports to Max, parallel the key elements of journal-keeping practice that I implement in FYW. The major difference of course is that my relationship with Max was driven by my own initiative, my desire to finish my dissertation and my need for support in that endeavor; whereas my relationship to students as their instructor puts pressure on students to act in accordance with my instructions. I want to use my instructions to create a situation in which students can experiment with using personal writing that no one else will read as a way to begin to question and investigate the intentions and values that motivate their learning-work as college students. This situation is supported by "reflection" assignments in which students report back to me about their experiments as a way of gaining insight into how, whether, to what extent students are making sense of this reflexive experimentation.

Facilitating and assessing daily journal-keeping practice in a first-year writing course

At the beginning of the course, I introduced a "daily process journal" assignment, first by inviting students to try (in class) Lynda Barry's "Daily Diary" exercise which focuses on quick multisensory observation and mixes listing and drawing. Then I described the expectations of the assignment along these lines:

> The goal is for you to develop a daily journal practice by putting something in your journal every day. I recommend carrying your notebook around with you and writing or drawing in it when you are feeling bored or stressed. I really should put "daily" in quotes because I want to assure you that if you miss a day or two now and then you have not failed. Developing a daily writing practice is hard and takes time. I will always ask you to be honest with me in reflections about how much you are journaling.
>
> Remember that I will not be reading your process journal entries! This is a space just for you to write, draw, express, get your thoughts down, work through things. It's a space for you to think about how you are your own reader. Still, I'm interested in what you're doing with your journals, so instead of reading them, I'll ask you to write journal reflections periodically.
>
> Periodically throughout the semester (right after major essays are due), we'll have Journal Lab days, when we'll do an "open-mic" style journal show-and-tell, and I'll give you new exercises and techniques to experiment with.

These paragraphs are all that I put in writing for students explaining the journal practice assignment; I certainly elaborated on it and answered many student questions about these expectations during class and office hours meetings. A certain percentage of final course credit for "Process Work" (30 points) included their journal practice efforts. I assessed these efforts by taking seriously what they shared in their reflections and in our one-on-one conversations and in class.

As I explained to my 2018 FYW students, I tried to base their course grades on their work as jointly assessed by me and each student in one-on-one conferences, also informed by what they shared in a series of reflective writing assignments, essentially structured as letters to me about their process. I did not attribute any grades to individual assignments, and in fact,

the freedom from attempting to "fairly" assign ranked quantitative grades to students' work enabled me to share much more extensive individualized feedback on their writing than I would otherwise have been able to do.

Students frequently asked me if they were on track to get the grade they wanted (almost everyone hoped to get an A). This was indicative of the great value and importance that students place on grades in relation to their college coursework, which I feel deserves respect. With reference to their visible efforts to fulfill the tasks in the assigned sequence of essays and readings, I was generally able to respond to these questions either with an unambiguous "yes" or by encouraging the student to consult with me in office hours because in such cases their efforts were not yet visible to me in way that I felt comfortable saying they were on track for that grade. While students remained concerned about their course grades, however, their general opinion (as expressed in a mid-semester teaching review session) was that the absence of grades given to individual assignments greatly reduced the amount of stress they felt about our class compared to their other classes or compared to their peers in other FYW courses with more traditional grading approaches.

At no point in the semester would I say that a student "currently has X grade" because at any time a student whose efforts were not visible might communicate something to me that radically shifted my perception of that student's efforts, their situation, what barriers they were facing, et cetera. Or a student who started out very actively and visibly engaged might struggle later. Almost all students in my class finished with As, which might invite questions about "grade inflation" or about whether the difficulty level of my course was "appropriate." I don't

currently have answers to these questions, which might be important ones especially for contingent faculty whose employment depends heavily on student feedback.

Students who received grades other than A in my class were either intentional about their efforts to reach the grade they received (by taking on fewer than all the assigned tasks) or they were not able to communicate with me about their circumstances or their intentions. For instance, after an impeccable performance for the first few weeks, one student's class attendance and completion of assignments fell off sharply, and they didn't respond to my many attempts to find out what had changed for them. Only after the semester ended did I learn that the student had been struggling with mental illness, but at that point it wasn't in my power to change the barely passing grade that I had given them.

I don't know how to get around this reliance on "visible efforts" without totally abolishing the practice of grading. Being in the position of instructor in an institution that uniformly gives out grades requires our participation in the surveillance of students and the exchange of grades. This truth makes me angry and sad because these institutions have so much power to control access to much of our societies, cultures, and knowledge-making processes; and because to me, to work at meaning-making with these students is joyful and satisfying. At the very least, I hope that in creating a kinder, more flexible environment for students, my pedagogy opens space for question and imagination that begins to show us how things could work otherwise.

Exit Note / Dedication of Merit

It's difficult to write an ending to this text. I've resisted stating conclusions or even making formal endings of any kind throughout these essays, because I want to resist the impulses to formal closure that lend themselves to valuing final products of writing over the processes of meaning-making, inquiry, reflection, and transformation. Yet I do find certain devices useful for marking endings in terms of a moving-on from one kind of engagement into something else. The first of these devices, from my journal-keeping practice, is what I call an Exit Note. The second is a Buddhist ritual that I've learned from the Recovery Dharma sangha or community of practice: it's called a Dedication of Merit. I want to try inhabiting both devices here.

The Exit Note (sometimes I also call it an Exit Entry) is a particular kind of last entry in a volume of my journal. The significance of an Exit Note is occasioned—it marks an occasion, the closure of a particular journal volume—in a way that depends on a certain understanding of the chronicity of my journal practice and of the material archive it produces. My journal practice has mainly been structured around a chronological sequence of volumes (or notebooks) that I fill, page by page with more-or-less-daily writing and drawing, one after another.[131] I think of this chronological sequence as a "current" that flows through my archive parallel to the passage of time. And I think of the volume(s) I'm actively using from day to day in the present as "Current Volumes." When I start a new current volume, it is unfamiliar, blank, and featureless, but it becomes familiar to my physical senses and imagination as the material of my practice.

[131] Actually, this is oversimplifying the chronology of my volumes, representing it as more linear than it is, as most of the time I have more than one volume in use at any given time; and sometimes I stop using a volume for no particular reason before it is full, and then start filling it again sometime later on. But there's a dominant tendency in my practice to center on one particular volume after another.

Filling the volume and reaching the last pages brings strong emotions with it: it's satisfying, but also sad, and maybe also a relief to move on. An Exit Note is about taking the opportunity of a final entry to reflect on these feelings of ending a volume. I've also used it as an opportunity to reflect on what my journal practice is generally, how it works, and how I want to use it going forward.

The Exit Note entails an acknowledgment that journal writing is part of an ongoing, potentially never-ending series of markings, utterances or compositional acts—potentially never-ending, that is, within a journaler's writerly lifetime. It marks a shift in the relationship between my present disposition to write and the journal volume in question. As I phrased it in an Exit Note from one of my dissertation journals (2019): "Upon this scrib, this volume will be closed: no longer available for new scrib but always welcoming return and new feedback on all existing entries." In other words, the volume shifts from being a present-day go-to space for journal writing, to being a volume of "old" writing that goes on the shelf with the rest of my "old" volumes. It acknowledges that in Keeping the volume—maintaining it as part of my archive, after I'm no longer actively writing in it—I make it available for Return, even if I never actually do return to it. In practice, I have some volumes that I return to often and others that I haven't given another look since I filled them.

If these words make an Exit Note to the volume of this dissertation, it is similarly to mark that this text is "closed," no longer a space for my daily ongoing engagement in what I call "scrib" (both a verb and a noun, a reduction of "scribbling"). Yet also it marks that this text remains open for my Return to it, an opportunity to observe my own thinking and practice at a

particular point in time. It is a volume in an ongoing practice of articulation and composition that won't end as long as I'm able to write.

In telling you about my Exit Note device, I'm ending another essay with a Journal Show and Tell, as I did my Introduction and "Methodology of Practice." This too is a kind of ending that feels useful to me, the point at which I turn outward from my private keeping-work to share something of my practice with others.

I'm thinking of dharma teachings: the traditional story goes that the Buddha spent years in solitary practice, until at a certain point they turned their practice outward and shared it in their teachings. Many Buddhist sutras end the same way: the Buddha finishes speaking, and then the listening bhikkhus are "delighted to put his teachings into practice" (Nhat Hanh, *Awakening* 227). Buddhism teaches that every person carries the innate wisdom of a buddha, as Pema Chödrön explains: "Buddha, which means 'awake,' is not someone you worship. Buddha is not someone you aspire to; Buddha is not somebody who was born more than two thousand years ago and was smarter than you'll ever be. Buddha is our inherent nature—our buddha nature—and what that means is that if you're going to grow up fully, the way that it happens is that you begin to connect with the intelligence that you already have" (103-4). Buddha is not only a relationship I have to my own innate intelligence and goodness; it is also a call to recognize this intelligence in other beings. That is, if buddha is the potential wisdom and intelligence that each of us carries, then "buddha" becomes a practice-trope that can enable us to recognize the powerful teachings that we can offer to each other.

Showing and Telling about a journal device is an offering out of one's own personal practice with the hope that others might be able to take up that device and experiment with it

in their own practice. Whether or not anyone does take up the device however doesn't affect its power for me or the delight I take in sharing it. This is my overarching hope for this project as a whole: I want this text to be an offering of ideas and insights and devices that you can take up and try out in your practice, to the extent that these resonate with your own needs, intentions, and values.

This brings me to the other device of endings that I'm invoking here, the Buddhist practice of a Dedication of Merit. In the Buddhist-informed sobriety community Recovery Dharma (access www.recoverydharma.org), formal meetings typically end with this practice, a brief meditation and blessing that is read by a meeting facilitator. As we study and practice the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path for the sake of ending the suffering of craving and addiction in our own lives, our collective intention, expressed through the Dedication of Merit, is that our practice be of benefit to all living beings:

> May all who cling with fear accept the freedom of letting go.
> May all minds and hearts awaken to the possibility of recovery,
> compassion, and peace.
> May we learn to embrace change and uncertainty as part of life's fullness.
> May we give freely all that we have been given.
> May our recovery be an offering to all beings everywhere.[132]

The dharma is a useful set of teachings and practices for recovering from addiction because its whole point is ending the suffering of craving, the suffering of grasping to things that are in truth empty and impermanent. These practices are never-ending, we constantly begin again, over and over, starting where we are (Chödrön).

[132] This excerpted text of a Dedication of Merit was shared with me by Jer, a Recovery Dharma meeting facilitator, who adapted it from other sources unknown to me.

I dedicate the merits of this and all my teaching and learning work to the hope for a better world. May we each find the courage to refuse the violence we are handed; to love and care for one another; and to ask, to try, and to find out how things could be otherwise. May all who are entangled in oppressive relations find new power, vitality, and possibility in meaning-making practice.

Bibliography

Adams, Kathleen. *Journal to the Self*. New York: Warner Books, 1990.

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Elizabeth Wardle. *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2015.

Ahmed, Sara. "Against Students." *Feministkilljoys.com.* 2015.

------ *Complaint!* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021.

------ *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017.

------ *On Being Included.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.

------ *Queer Phenomenology.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

------ *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

------ *What's the Use?: On the Uses of Use.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

------ *Willful Subjects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

Armstrong, Elizabeth A. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* [4th ed]. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012 [1987].

Baldwin, Christina. *One to One: Self-Understanding Through Journal Writing* [new & updated edition]. New York: M. Evans & Co., 1991 [1977].

Banks, Adam. *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006.

Baril, Alexandre. “Doctor, am I an Anglophone trapped in a Francophone body?” *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 10.2 (2016): 155-172.

Barry, Lynda. *Making Comics*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2019.

------ *One Hundred Demons*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2002.

------ *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor*. New York: Drawn & Quarterly/FSG, 2014.

------ *What It Is*. New York: Drawn & Quarterly/FSG, 2008.

Bartholomae, David. “Inventing the University.” *Journal of Basic Writing* 5.1 (1986): 4-23.

Barton, Ellen. “Inductive Discourse Analysis: Discovering Rich Features.” In Barton and Stygall, 19-42.

Barton, Ellen and Gail Stygall, eds. *Discourse Studies in Composition*. Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2002.

Batchelor, Stephen. *Buddhism Without Beliefs*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1997.

Behm, Nicholas N., Sherry Rankins-Robertson, and Duane Roen, eds. *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing: Scholarship and Applications* Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2017.

Berlin, James. “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class.” *College English* 50.5 (1988): 477-494.

Berthoff, Ann. “In Response to ‘The Students’ Right to Their Own Language.’” *Students’ Right to Their Own Language: A Critical Sourcebook.* Staci Perryman-Clark, David E. Kirkland, and Austin Jackson, eds. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2015.

------*The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1981.

Bizzell, Patricia. *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992.

------"Cognition, Convention, and Certainty: What We Need to Know About Writing." *PRE/TEXT* 3.3 (1982): 213–44. Rpt. in *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*. Ed. Susan Miller. New York: Norton, 2009. 479–501.

Brewer, Elizabeth, Cynthia L. Selfe, and M. Remi Yergeau. "Creating a Culture of Access in Composition Studies." *Composition Studies* 42.2 (2014): 151-154.

Brookfield, Stephen D. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Shaping Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017.

------*Holding Change*. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2021.

brown, adrienne maree, and Autumn Brown. *How to Survive the End of the World* [podcast]. 2017. endoftheworldshow.org

brown, adrienne maree, and Toshi Reagon. "Chapter 1." *Octavia's Parables* [podcast]. 2020. readingoctavia.com

brown, adrienne maree, and Walidah Imarisha. *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2015.

Brueggemann, Brenda Jo, and Georgina Kleege. "Gently down the Stream: Reflections on Mainstreaming." *Rhetoric Review* 22.2 (2003): 174-184.

Brunsma, David L, Eric S Brown, & Peggy Placier. "Teaching Race at Historically White Colleges and Universities: Identifying and Dismantling the Walls of Whiteness." *Critical Sociology* 39.5 (2012): 717-738.

Bunn, Mike. "How to Read Like a Writer." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, vol. 2*. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, eds. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2011. 71-86.

Burke, Kenneth. "Four Master Tropes." *Kenyon Review* 3.4 (1941): 421-438.

Burton, Gideon. *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*. rhetoric.byu.edu/

Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1993.

------ *Parable of the Talents*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1998.

Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* [10th Anniversary Edition]. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2002 [1992].

Carter, Angela M. "Teaching with Trauma: Trigger Warnings, Feminism, and Disability Pedagogy." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 35.2 (2015): n.p. Accessed 23 May 2022. https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/4652/3935

Clare, Eli. *Exile and Pride*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999 [repub. 2015].

Collective Against White Supremacy. "CAWS Anti-racist Principles v1 (Aug 2017)." Public Google document. 2017.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought* [2nd ed]. New York: Routledge, 2009 [2000].

@conflicttransformation [Luna N. Hughson]. "Okay, but what are Values anyway?" *Instagram*, 19 July 2020, www.instagram.com/p/CC1N9MrDYPw. Accessed 22 May 2022.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (1991): 1241.

Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab. "Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics." *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture*. 2014. Accessed 22 May 2022. enculturation.net/our-story-begins-here

Cushman, Ellen. "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change." *College Composition and Communication* 47.1 (1996): 7-28.

------ "Translingual and Decolonial Approaches to Meaning-Making." College English 78.3 (2016): 234-242.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984.

Deer Heart, Rosalie, and Alison Strickland. *Harvesting Your Journals*. San Cristobal, NM: Heart Link Publications, 1999.

DiAngelo, Robin. *White Fragility*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.

Dhamoon, Rita Kaur. “Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality.” *Political Research Quarterly* 64.1 (2011): 230-243.

Dolmage, Jay Timothy. *Academic Ableism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017.

------ *Disability Rhetorics*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014.

------ “Mapping Composition.” in Liewicki-Wilson and Brueggemann (2008), 14-27.

------ “Universal Design: Places to Start.” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 35.2 (2015): n.p. https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/4632/3946

Downs, Douglas, and Elizabeth Wardle. “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)envisioning "First-Year Composition" as "Introduction to Writing Studies." *College Composition and Communication* 58.4 (2007), 552-584.

Dunn, Patricia A. *Talking, Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies in the Teaching of Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

Eubanks, Philip. *Metaphor and Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

English Department Writing Program. *Teaching First-Year Writing: A Guide for New Instructors of English 124 and 125 2014-2015.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Department of English, 2014.

Fahnestock, Jeanne, and Marie Secor. “Rhetorical Analysis.” In Barton and Stygall, 177-200.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. With an introduction by Donaldo Macedo. New York: Bloomsbury, 2000.

Fritsch, Kelly, Clare O’Connor, and AK Thompson. *Keywords for Radicals: The Contested Vocabulary of Late-Capitalist Struggle*. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2016.

Fulwiler, Toby, ed. *The Journal Book*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987.

Gaipa, Mark. “Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority for Their Writing.” Pedagogy 4.3 (2004): 419-437.

Gee, James Paul. “Discourse Analysis: What Makes it Critical?” In Rogers, 23-45.

Giroux, Henry A. *On Critical Pedagogy* (2ed). London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

Glenn, Cheryl. *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004.

Goldblatt, Eli. “Don’t Call It Expressivism: Legacies of a ‘Tacit Tradition’.” *CCC* 68.3 (2017): 438-465.

Gordon, Aubrey, and Michael Hobbes. *Maintenance Phase* [podcast]. 2020. maintenancephase.com

Gottschalk, Katherine, and Keith Hjortshoj. *The Elements of Teaching Writing: A Resource for Instructors in All Disciplines*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004.

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. *Undrowned*. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020.

Hamraie, Aimi. *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Heilker, Paul, and Peter Vandenberg, eds. *Keywords in Composition Studies*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton-Cook, 1996.

------ *Keywords in Writing Studies*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2015.

Hilbert, Betsy S. “It Was a Dark and Nasty Night It Was a Dark and You Would Not Believe How Dark It Was a Hard Beginning.” *College Composition and Communication* 43.1 (1992): 75-80.

Hiyama, Andrew, and Riyah Basha. “University receives ‘F’ grade on racial equity in public university study.” *The Michigan Daily*. 26 September 2018. Accessed online 5 May 2022. michigandaily.com

hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, 1984.

------ *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press, 1989.

------ *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

------ *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Hubrig, Adam, and Ruth Osorio. “Enacting a Culture of Access in our Conference Spaces.” *College Composition and Communication* 72.1 (2020): 87-117.

Huckin, Thomas. “Context-Sensitive Text Analysis.” *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia Sullivan, eds. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.

------ “Critical Discourse Analysis and the Discourse of Condescension.” In Barton and Stygall, 155-176.

Huckin, Thomas, Jennifer Andrus, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon. “Critical Discourse Analysis and Rhetoric and Composition.” *College Composition and Communication* 64.1 (2012): 107-129.

Hurst, Allison L. *The Burden of Academic Success: Managing Working-Class Identities in College*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010.

Inoue, Asao B. *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies.* Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2015.

------ “How Do We Language So People Stop Killing Each Other, Or What Do We Do About White Language Supremacy?” Keynote Address. Conference on College Composition and Communication Annual Convention. Pittsburgh, PA: 14 March 2019. tinyurl.com/4C19ChairAddress

Jacobs, Steve. “Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996: Fueling the Creation of New Electronic Curb Cuts.” *The Center for an Accessible Society: Disability Issues Information for Journalists*. 1999. accessiblesociety.org/topics/technology/ eleccurbcut.htm. Accessed 22 May 2022.

Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Keating, Analouise. *Teaching Transformation*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007.

Kerschbaum, Stephanie. *Toward a New Rhetoric of Difference.* CCCC/NCTE, 2014.

Kerr, Kathleen. “Personal.” In Heilker and Vandenberg, *Keywords in Writing Studies*, 135-139.

Kishimoto, Kyoko. “Anti-racist Pedagogy: From Faculty’s Self-reflection to Organizing Within And Beyond The Classroom.” *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 21.4 (2018): 540-554.

Kleege, Georgina. *Sight Unseen*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.

Kuppers, Petra. *Studying Disability Arts and Culture: An Introduction*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1994.

Lawrence, Sandra M., and Beverly Daniel Tatum. "White Educators as Allies: Moving from Awareness to Action." *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance*. Edited by Michelle Fine, et al. New York: Routledge, 2004. 362-372.

Lensmire, T. et al. "McIntosh as Synecdoche: How Teacher Education's Focus on White Privilege Undermines Antiracism," *Harvard Educational Review,* 83.3 (2013): 410-431.

Liewicki-Wilson, Cynthia, and Brenda Brueggemann, eds. *Disability and the Teaching of Writing*. New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008.

Lorde, Audre. *The Selected Works*. Edited and with an introduction by Roxane Gay. New York: Norton, 2020.

"Academic Initiatives: Reviewing R&E." *College of Literature, Science, and the Arts*. 2016. lsa.umich.edu/lsa/faculty-staff/undergraduate-education/academic-initiatives.html Accessed 22 May 2022.

MacDonald, Susan Peck. "The Analysis of Academic Discourse(s)." In Barton and Stygall, 115-134.

McDermott, Ryan. *Tropologies: Ethics and Invention in England, c. 1350-1600*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2016.

McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*. Paula Rothenberg, ed. New York: Worth, 2008. 123-127.

McRuer, Robert. *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. New York: NYU

Press, 2006.

Mellard, James. *Doing Tropology: Analysis of Narrative Discourse*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Menakem, Resmaa. *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies*. Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017.

Meyer, Michael. "Between theory, method, and politics: positioning of the approaches to CDA." in Barton and Stygall, 14-31.

Milner, Marion. *A Life of One's Own*. New York: Routledge, 2011 [1934].

Mingus, Mia. "Access Intimacy: The Missing Link." *Leaving Evidence*. 2011. leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/. Accessed 22 May 2022.

------ "You Are Not Entitled to Our Deaths: COVID, Abled Supremacy and Interdependence." leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2022/01/16/you-are-not- entitled-to-our-deaths-covid-abled-supremacy-interdependence/. Accessed 22 May 2022.

Minich, Julia Avril. "Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now." *Lateral* 5.1 (2016): n.p. csalateral.org/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-critical-disability-studies-now-minich/ Accessed 22 May 2022.

Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back* [4th ed]. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. *Awakening of the Heart*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2012.

------ *The Art of Living.* New York: HarperCollins, 2017.

------ *The Other Shore.* Berkeley, CA: Palm Leaves Press, 2017.

Okun, Tema. *The Emperor Has No Clothes: Teaching about Race and Racism to People Who Don't Want to Know.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc., 2010.

O'Reilly, Mary Rose. *The Peaceable Classroom.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1993.

Owens, Lama Rod. *Love and Rage*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2020.

paperson, la. *A Third University Is Possible*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Peoples, Whitney. GSI Learning Community on Anti-Racist Teaching. Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan, Winter 2019.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018.

Piercy, Marge. *Woman on the Edge of Time*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2016 [1976].

Powell, Malea. "2012 CCCC Chair's Address: Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act." *College Composition and Communication* 64.2 (2012): 383-406.

Price, Margaret. *Mad at School*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

Progoff, Ira. *At a Journal Workshop* [Revised ed.] New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1992 [1975].

Rainer, Tristine. *The New Diary* [updated edition]. New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2004 [1978].

Recovery Dharma. *Recovery Dharma: How to Use Buddhist Practices and Principles to Heal the Suffering of Addiction* [first edition]. August 2019. www.recoverydharma.org

Rhodes, Jacqueline, and Jonathan Alexander. "Reimagining the Social Turn: New Work from the Field." *College English* 76.6 (2014), 481-487.

Rhodes, Jacqueline, and Jonathan Alexander. *Techne: Queer Meditations on Writing the Self*. Logan, UT: Computers and Composition Digital Press/Utah State University Press, 2015. https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/techne/. Accessed 22 May 2022.

Roeder, Tara, and Roseanne Gatto, eds. *Critical Expressivism: Theory and Practice in the Composition Classroom.* Anderson, SC: WAC Clearinghouse/Parlor Press, 2015.

Rogers, Rebecca, ed. *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (2ed). New York: Routledge, 2011.

Royster, Jacqueline Jones, and Gesa E. Kirsch. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012.

Samuels, Ellen. “Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time.” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37.3 (2017).

Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2000.

Schalk, Sami, and Jina B. Kim. “Integrating Race, Transforming Feminist Disability Studies.” *Signs* 46.1 (2020): 31-55.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Sensoy, Oslem, and Robin DiAngelo. “Respect Differences?: Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education.” *Democracy & Education*, 22.1 (2014): 1-10.

Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Theory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

------ *Disability Aesthetics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *As We Have Always Done*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Sins Invalid. *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: A Disability Justice Primer*. 2016. www.sinsinvalid.org

Shor, Ira. “Critical Pedagogy Is Too Big to Fail.” *Journal of Basic Writing* 28.2 (2009): 6-27.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide to Interpreting Life Narratives* [2nd ed]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Spidell, Cathy, and William H. Thelin. “Not Ready to Let Go: A Study of Resistance to Grading Contracts.” *Composition Studies* 34.1 (2006): 35-68.

Tate, Gary, Amy Rupiper Taggart, Kurt Schick, and H. Brooke Hessler, eds. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (2nd edition). New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Thompson, Kate. *Therapeutic Journal Writing: An Introduction for Professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011.

Titchkosky, Tanya. *The Question of Access: Disability, Space, Meaning*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

Treleaven, David, and Dan Siegel. “The Window of Tolerance and Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness.” *The Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness Podcast*. 20 April 2021. davidtreleaven.com/tsm-podcast-episode-20-dan-siegel/. Accessed 22 May 2022

TV Tropes: The All Devouring Pop-Culture Wiki. tvtropes.org

Vega, Tanzina. “Colorblind Notion Aside, Colleges Grapple with Racial Tension.” *The New York Times*. 24 February 2014. Accessed online 5 May 2022.

Vidali, Amy. “Seeing What We Know: Disability and Theories of Metaphor.” *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 4.1 (2010): 33-54.

Villanueva, Victor. 2006. “Blind: Talking About the New Racism.” *The Writing Center Journal*, 26.1: 3-19.

Waite, Stacey. *Teaching Queer: Radical Possibilities for Writing and Knowing*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017.

Welsh, Susan. “Writing: In and with the World.” *College Composition and Communication* 46.1 (1995): 103-107.

White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

williams, angel Kyodo, Lama Rod Owens, and Jasmine Syedullah. *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2016.

Witte, Ruth Dutting. *Changing the World Through Children*. Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, 2019.

Womack, Anne-Marie. “Teaching Is Accommodation: Universally Designing Composition Classrooms and Syllabi.” *College Composition and Communication* 68.3 (2017): 494-525.

Wood, Tara, and Shannon Madden. “Suggested Practices for Syllabus Accessibility Statements.” *PraxisWiki* / *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. praxis.technorhetoric.net/tiki-index.php?page=Suggested_Practices_for_Syllabus_Accessibility_Statements. Accessed 22 May 2022.

Yagelski, Robert. *Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Nonduality, and the Crisis of Sustainability*. New York: Hampton Press, 2011.

Yancy, George, and Maria del Guadelupe Davidson, eds. *Exploring Race in Predominantly White Classrooms: Scholars of Color Reflect*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake, ed. *A Rhetoric of Reflection*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2016.

------ *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998.

Yergeau, M. Remi et al. "Multimodality in Motion: Disability and Kairotic Spaces." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* 18.1 (2013). Accessed 22 May 2022. kairos.technorhetoric.net/18.1/coverweb/yergeau-et-al/

Yergeau, M. Remi. *Authoring Autism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

Yosso, Tara J. "Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8.1 (2005): 69-91.

–