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In this thesis, I conduct an analysis of blogs in order to understand their potential use in the composition classroom with the goals of students writing for a public audience and developing their rhetorical and civic agency. I do so by exploring the potential for the blogosphere as a public sphere and by arguing that it would be productive to view the blogosphere as an ideal city. I argue that the ideal city, as described by theorist Iris Marion Young, provides a potential model for inclusive democratic discourse and for our movement online that can guide the ways we use, design, and engage blogs. While prior studies have viewed blogs as diaristic, I argue it is productive to understand the blog as a genealogical descendent of the zine (amateur, independently produced magazine). By focusing on a study of *Fag Rag*, a 1970s radical queer zine, I show that blogs can be understood as having a counterpublic readership, challenging traditional notions of authorship, circulating in the public, having multimodal content, and being indeterminate and palimpsest in form. From this analysis, I draw implications for public student writing in the composition classroom in relation to design, editorship, multimodality, and exigence for student writing. I conclude by outlining some possible material practices for the composition classroom, critiquing some potential limitations of my study, and raising questions for future research.

Traversing the City of Blogs:
Pedagogy, Performance, and Public Spheres

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Michael J. Faris, Author

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Introduction

> This is an especially difficult confession to start off with, not only because failure is painful in itself, but because most books by teachers about teaching, whatever their purpose, begin with the author establishing credibility as a longtime and successful classroom teacher. I can make no such claim; it is a sorry fact that my twenty-five years as a teacher and teacher of teachers are carried on the very weak legs of a failed high school English teacher. (Robert Tremmel, *Zen and the Practice of Teaching English* 1)

I would like to begin this thesis, as my mentor at Iowa State Bob Tremmel begins his book *Zen and the Practice of Teaching English*, with a story about failure. Tremmel uses his discussion of his initial failure at being the respected, centered teacher he wanted to be to provoke a strong discussion of the application of Zen Buddhist concepts to the practice of teaching English and of being a teacher. Here, I would like to use a discussion of my failure to incorporate blogs into the classroom in a meaningful way to move into a discussion of the potential use of blogs in the classroom, particularly with the goals of helping develop student writers as agents who engage in a more democratic public sphere. Involved in this is my belief that the composition classroom must include public writing — writing that involves actual engagement with audience outside of the teacher — perhaps just other students, but hopefully others outside of the university as well. I believe that blogs can provide a medium for this potential. This desire to use blogs to develop democratic agency raises questions that I will be addressing in this thesis.

Spurred by my excitement over being a blogger (both as an academic and as a personal blogger) and my experience using classroom blogs in a mixed graduate-undergraduate course on language, technology, and culture, taught by Lisa Ede at Oregon State University, I decided I wanted to use blogs in the classroom as well. As a graduate teaching assistant, I was teaching one or two first-year composition courses a term, and I chose to incorporate blogs in two of these classes. I saw blogs as a way to extend the classroom beyond its set time and location, so that communication could continue among students and between the teacher and students. I attempted using blogs in two different courses, one a once-a-week night course during the winter term, the other a twice-a-week afternoon course during the subsequent spring term. Because the winter term course only met once a week, I also hoped the blog would provide a way for students to continue interacting with each other and give the class some continuity that might be lost by only meeting once a week. However, while I was excited about blogs, and a few of my students were familiar with blogging through MySpace, Blogger, and LiveJournal, I found that students only posted to the blog when I required them to do so, their posts were short and not very thoughtful, and their comments to each other were superficial and sporadic. I was disappointed, and this disappointment was coupled by the stress of simultaneously being a teacher and a student. Because the blog was supplemental to the course and did not meet central requirements, it soon hit the backburner as we focused on other reading and writing in class.

I see the failure of the classroom blog as having multiple causes: 1) the blog was a supplement to the course that was not fully integrated with the course materials, so students saw no clear purpose to the blog other than my ambiguous explanations about "extending the classroom outside the classroom" and "keeping in contact with each other"; 2) the blog was not intentional and its use was not predicated with specific goals in mind — that is, I had not clearly articulated in my own planning how using blogs would make them better writers; 3) the blog did not engage the public sphere in meaningful ways; 4) students felt no ownership over the blog and so did not post unless it was assigned; 5) there was no access to a computer lab during class time, so students' interaction with the blog had to be done completely outside the class with no scaffolding — I was only able to show the students how to log-in and post via a projector, leaving little room for scaffolding of the use of blogging software.

Without a clearly stated purpose, my requests that students post on the blog seemed superfluous to students. Students posted to the blog in order to introduce themselves to the course, and posts ranged in length and quality from one-sentence statements to a paragraph or two stating career goals and interests. I also requested that students post introducing the research projects they were working on and respond to each other, as well as write responses to a few advertisements that I had posted on the blog. Most students posted to meet the assignment, but not a single student posted self-sponsored writing.

The first-year composition course at Oregon State is focused on academic writing, with three major essays that go through revisions after conferences with the teacher and peer review held in class. Additionally, students read essays, discuss the essays' ideas, organization, and rhetorical moves in class, and write informal written responses that are minimally graded. With so much packed into a ten-week quarter, it is hard to fit in other work that does not seem directly tied to the goals of writing the three major essays. It became clear that for a blog to work in a classroom, the integration must be intentional with clear goals in mind, students must see the purpose of using a blog, some time must be spent in the classroom using blogs, students must feel ownership over the blog, the blog must be integrated with the curriculum, and the blog must have advantages over other forms of online communication, such as those held on content management systems (CMS) such as Blackboard or Web-CT. Two of these advantages of blogs over CMS's, as I see it, are their potential to be public and the possibilities for developing student agency.

At this juncture, I could very well have given up on blogs, as Steven Krause does after a failed use in his writing classroom. In his 2004 *Kairos* article "When Blogging Goes Bad: A Cautionary Tale about Blogs, Email Lists, Discussions, and Interaction," Krause writes that he was unable to gain the interactive environment that he had desired with blogs and concludes that we should not view blogs as any different from other discussion boards and listservs online. Krause found that his students posted infrequently and disproportionately to each other and seemed to not read each other's posts. Krause intended to be "open-ended" in his requirements for the blog, but his students instead read the assignment as "vague." While he hoped that a blog would foster a rich discussion, Krause found that great conversations in the course only occurred through e-mail and face-to-face discussions in the classroom. Krause concludes that various Internet tools are useful for discussion, but blogs are more useful for publishing and delivery. He is also concerned that blogs are too individualistic and not collaborative enough (Krause, "When Blogging").

However, I am not so quick to give up on blogs (as Krause is). For one, blogging technology has changed since Krause's use, as he admits in later work, with the addition of comments to Blogger, the development of blog aggregators using RSS feeds, and other blog software that makes it easier to create multiple-authored blogs (Krause, "Comments"). My desire to explore possibilities for blogs in the classroom also comes out of my own experience with blogging, both as a student and scholar, and through my own self-sponsored blogging. When I first began blogging in February 2004, my blog posts were purely diaristic in style and purpose, with few links to other blogs. At this time, my blog did not enable comments. As I gained blogging experience and read other blogs, however, I began to write in more varied modes, including short essays, political commentary, to-do lists, reviews of books, movies, and music, and filter posts that direct readers to other interesting websites. My experience is similar to blogger Rebecca Blood, who writes,

> Shortly after I began producing *Rebecca's Pocket* I noticed two side effects I had not expected. First, I discovered my own interests. I thought I knew what I was interested in, but after linking stories for a few months I could see that I was much more interested in science, archaeology, and issues of injustice than I had realized. More importantly, I began to value more highly my own point of view. In composing my link text every day I carefully considered my own opinions and ideas, and I began to feel that my perspective was unique and important. (Blood)

Blogging did help me to discover my own interests and to value my own perspective and voice, as it did for Blood, but I experienced one other side effect of blogging: that my experience blogging mattered in the material world. I discovered that my blogging had a direct effect on conversations I had in person with friends and colleagues, as well as with strangers. I discovered, in other words, that blogging helped me engage in public.

An instance comes to mind when I blogged about homophobia and the conflation of sexuality and gender performance, provoked by a comment I heard in a class I was taking. An acquaintance of mine who reads my blog commented, empathizing with the comment that I had construed as homophobic. Over the course of a week, we held an engaged discussion on my blog, which eventually prompted a powerful discussion with other people while at an open mic reading. While I might not say that consensus was built among all those involved in the conversation, I think the folks involved (including myself) were forced to think deeply about the topic and challenge our own pre-conceptions. We were involved, I believe, in collaborative meaning-making through dialogue. This conversation, both online and in a physical public space, stressed to me the possibility for engaged discourse on blogs.

In addition to blogging about personal and political issues, I began a blog, titled *A Collage of Citations*, in October 2005 to serve as an online notebook for a research project in a course. Just as my first blog began with a rather inward audience, my academic blog began as rather inward, with myself as a primary audience. However, as the term ended, I continued the use of my blog to not only write notes to myself about research, but to engage in conversations with others in rhetoric and composition. I found that my blogging was able to facilitate my own entry into the discipline and into scholarly conversations.

My experience with blogs has also been positive in courses at Oregon State that have required blogging. In Lisa Ede's Language, Technology, and Culture course, a mixed undergraduate and graduate course, we used a classroom blog in order to experiment with a new medium and extend our conversation about course content outside the classroom. This blog was a huge success in helping to foster dialogue among students, and perhaps this success is best shown through the words of a classmate, posted to the course blog:

> The ability to quickly publish, for all to read, a snippet of my insanity is utterly amazing. I can't think of a better way to communicate with my classmates in a non-classroom setting. Discussion boards are rigid, e-mails are boring and slow... blogs are versatile, quick, linkable thoughts that flow from one to the next, well, like they do in my head. Blogs make me happy, and our class blog was awesome. (Ede et al., "Final Reading Response and Class Reflection")

At the beginning of the course, many students expressed reservations and fears about posting their thoughts so publicly, but very soon students were commenting on each other's posts, offering support, sharing experiences, and asking questions through the blog's comment feature. This was exciting for me when I saw how quickly everyone began commenting on the blog. Near the end of the term one of my classmates posted about the success of this blog, noting there were 228 individual posts with 383 comments. This seems like a lot of not only text generation for a quarter, but also a lot of dialogue, especially since only a few posts were required.

Our course blog also gained the attention of scholars whom we were reading and discussing on the blog. New London Group researcher and author of *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*, James Paul Gee wrote after reading our blog:

> I have looked at your Blog and am just really amazed at how interesting, creative, and just plain smart the whole discussion is. I am usually no fan of such "chats", because it often seems that the discussion is less good than the document being discussed, but your comments, positive and negative, really add value to the material in my book. (Ede et al., "A post to the class from James Paul Gee")

My experience with blogs in Lisa Ede's class showed me the potential for classroom use of blogs to foster strong discussion and strengthen relationships among classmates, as well as deepen lively discussions of course material.

Another experience I have had with blogs as a student came in my Bible as Literature course at Oregon State. In this course there were fewer students and less interaction on the blog, but I found that I was learning a lot about my own habits of discourse, both as an academic and in my public writing. Early in the course, I wrote a post disagreeing with the professor, Chris Anderson, about concepts of power and relationships. Chris wrote a comment on my post:

> Can you make this more a conversation than a monologue, though, by spending a few more sentences representing and even quickly illustrating what I said? What you think is clear, and why. What I think and why isn't--or it's not clear you hear what I'm saying.
>
> I'm thinking of an intellectual work that doesn't involve just trading views, I guess, or disagreement at all. Or agreement. I guess I'm thinking of listening. (Anderson et al., “power, difference, and relationships”)

A few days later, I wrote a post about my disagreement with Joseph Campbell, but still without adequately summarizing Campbell's perspective. Chris wrote me: “Again, Michael, I'll say what I said in an earlier post. Good. You can argue. That's fine. I'm hearing you. But can you represent the other position, too, and many others?” (“a postcolonialist / post-structuralist view of Campbell”). Granted, this conversation between Chris and me could have occurred just as easily through private journal entries that only he read. What the medium of the blog added, I believe, was a more conversational feeling that affected the way I received Chris’s comments. The metadiscourse (discourse about the ways we discourse) on the blog facilitated my reflection on the ways in which I was writing, reading, talking, and listening because the blog appeared more conversational and more immediate to me than a private journal entry.[1]

My own experience with blogs seems to be in direct contrast to my experience of asking students to blog in my class. This seems particularly true in terms of agency, engagement in the public sphere, fostering dialogue among students, and use of metadiscourse to reflect on the ways in which we dialogue. My interest in blogs has developed not only through my own experience, though, but also through my engagement with research in rhetoric and composition on blogs, and also my increasing political awareness of the necessity for rich, engaging public spheres in which citizens can dialogue. My interest in promoting an inclusive democratic public sphere through blogs and the composition classroom comes largely out of reading the works of Jürgen Habermas, Iris Marion Young, John Dewey, Henry Giroux, and others. Giroux, for instance, writes that "[i]nstead of providing [students] with vibrant public spheres, we offer them a commercialized culture in which consumerism is the only obligation of citizenship" (xviii). My engagement with these theorists and with research in rhetoric and composition (which I will discuss further below), leads me to ask the following questions:

- How can we best understand the blogosphere as a potential public sphere — in ways that are most inclusive and democratic? How would this understading of the blogosphere affect our understanding of what kinds of public writing could be produced in the classroom?
- How can we best understand blogs as public writing? This may mean understanding that the blog does not constitute a single genre; if we understand some blogs as genealogical descendants of other public writing (as opposed to the private writing of journals, diaries, commonplace books, and notebooks, as

scholars have most often suggested), what can we learn about blogs? What do the tensions between private and public teach us about blogs and classroom writing? How does this affect writing in the composition classroom?

- What does it mean to promote democratic life in classroom writing? How does this affect the pedagogies enacted in a classroom? Specifically, if we look for blogs as potential democratic public discourse and for ways to extend discourse outside of the classroom, what does this mean for actual practices in the classroom?

Before exploring these questions in later chapters, I would like to explore the definition of *blog* and outline some of the issues at stake in rhetoric and composition research so far.

What are blogs?

Thus far I have used the term blog unproblematically, as if its nature and definition were obvious. This obviousness, however, is not the case, as definitions of blogs have varied. Most definitions focus on form, though a few include content or hyperlinks and audience interaction as integral to what makes a blog. Perhaps the most inclusive definition is from Norwegian rhetoric scholar and blogger Jill Walker, who wrote this definition for the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* and subsequently posted it on her blog:

> A weblog, or blog, is a frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first [...]. Typically, weblogs are published by individuals and their style is personal and informal. Weblogs first appeared in the mid-1990s, becoming popular as simple and free publishing tools became

> available towards the turn of the century. Since anybody with a net connection can publish their own weblog, there is great variety in the quality, content, and ambition of weblogs, and a weblog may have anywhere from a handful to tens of thousands of daily readers. ("Final Version")

Other definitions, such as Will Richardson's and Sébastien Paquet's, both of which are cited frequently, include specific criteria for a website to be considered a weblog — these definitions are usually less inclusive than Walker's. Richardson, a public educator and blogger, defines blogs as:

> an easily created, easily updateable Website that allows an author (or authors) to publish instantly to the Internet from any Internet connection. [... T]hey are comprised of reflections and conversations that in many cases are updated every day (if not three or four times a day). Blogs engage readers with ideas and questions and links. They ask readers to think and to respond. They demand interaction. (17-18)

Richardson's definition privileges explicit interactivity between readers and the blog owner, as well as links to other webpages. Similarly, computer scientist and software developer Paquet's definition privileges links, but also privileges single-authorship. Paquet lists five criteria for a blog: 1) There must be a single author who also edits the site; 2) posts link to other websites; diaries that do not link outside cannot be considered blogs; 3) the blog is updated frequently, and posts are displayed in reverse chronological order; 4) it is free to read a blog and it is open to the public; and 5) the blog is archived; while older posts may not be visible on the main page, they are accessible through archives (Paquet). Paquet's definition privileges the personal blog over the collectively edited or written one, and the networked blog over the journal. Also, commenting, while allowed, is not a requirement in Paquet's definition.

These discrepancies among definitions of blogs (regarding ownership, commenting, and content) come in part, I believe, because of conflation of purpose, genre, and form. Do blogs constitute one genre? Some writers seem to believe so, and when they do, there is a conflation of form with content and purpose. Norwegian rhetoric scholar Torill Mortensen, in “Personal Publication and Public Attention,” offers a caution against focusing too strongly on the blog software:

> Defining weblogs through the software and technical solutions creates instant exclusion through terms that appear to be neutral and obvious, but which also work as constructions to exclude those without a certain level of technical sills or the understanding of the significance of these different software tools. (Mortensen)

Both Paquet’s and Richardson’s definitions serve to exclude certain sites that I would still call blogs, such as those found on Livejournal, which are often personal journals without links, other sites which do not allow commenting but still have other features of blogs, and blogs which are password protected and not open to the public. I use Walker’s definition above because it focuses mostly on the form of the blog and is most inclusive; I will explore issues of genre in more detail in Chapter 3.

Paquet traces weblogs back to 1996 with Tim Berners-Lee's "What's New?" at http://info.cern.ch/ (Paquet), and Rebecca Blood traces them to 1997 with Jon Barger’s *Robot Wisdom* at http://www.robotwisdom.com (Blood). Both of these weblogs acted as filters, where the editors provide readers with links to information and sites that they find interesting. In 1999 Peter Merholz announced he was going to pronounce the word “wee-blog,” and shortly the word was shortened to just “blog,” with the editor or writer of a blog called a “blogger.” With the introduction of free blogging tools, such as Pyra’s Blogger (now owned by Google), blogging proliferated (Blood). As of May 2007, the blog search engine Technorati.com claimed it was tracking 83.5 million blogs, and that "there are over 175,000 new blogs (that's just blogs) every day. Bloggers update their blogs regularly to the tune of over 1.6 million posts per day, or over 18 updates a second" ("About Us").

Scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition

Scholars in rhetoric and composition have developed an interest in blogs for multiple reasons, but at the forefront of this interest are the potentials of new media, specifically in regards to genre; the possibilities for changes in public discourse; the development of new self-sponsored literacy practices; and the potentials for using blogs in the writing classroom. The editors of the online collection *Into the Blogosphere* write that the proliferation of online social networking sites over the last twenty years, such as hypertext, wikis, and online discussion boards, has led to an interest in "the social, rhetorical, and discursive implications" of these new media (Gurak et al., "Introduction"). Of interest is the ways that new media affect or change the way we communicate, including ways of writing, ways of reading, ways in which social forces are reinforced or resisted, ways of social organizing, ways of experiencing agency and engaging in the public sphere. Gurak et al. note that blogs are one of the most recent new media to have captured the interest of researchers in rhetoric and composition, to the point that they became the topic of research at various conferences, including Computers and Writing and Conference on College Composition and Communication. "At these conferences," Gurak et al. write, "scholars have recognized that blogs are more than mere tools for communicating online; rather, they provide new possibilities for the Internet as a rhetorical space" ("Introduction"). While some claims about blogs have been criticized as overly utopian, Gurak et al. write:

> we find value in the power of blogs to forego the institutionalization of communicative practices and offer spaces for writing that are more collaboratively constructed than other online spaces, as bloggers freely link to, comment on, and augment each other's content. In this way, blogs allow for the possibility of developing new cultural practices of online communication in relation to previously established modes of ownership, authorship, and legitimacy of content and access to information. ("Introduction")

Just as the potential of blogs as new media is of interest to scholars, so too is the self-sponsored literacy practice of bloggers. As Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher show in *Literate Lives in the Information Age*, their research subjects considered the literacy skills they learned through self-sponsored work in electronic media "to be more compelling, far more germane to their future success than the more traditional literacy instruction they have received in school" (205). In the published version of her 2004 CCCC keynote address, Kathleen Blake Yancey notes that while "[f]aculty see blogs — if they see them at all — as (yet) another site for learning, typically in school; students see blogs as a means of organizing social action, a place for geographically far-flung friends to gather, a site for poets and musicians to plan a jam" ("Made" 302). While research has been conducted about literacy practices in electronic environments as a whole, research on blogs and blogging has only recently been initiated. *Into the Blogosphere*, published online, is still the only book-length study of blogging in rhetoric and composition, but scholars such as Jill Walker, Clancy Ratliff, and Colin Brooke are beginning to develop sophisticated research agendas. Interest in blogging and new media has expanded, thanks to scholars like Yancey, Selfe, and Hawisher, so that even those not directly working on new media increasingly recognize its importance.

Efforts to explore the potential pedagogical benefits of blogging are also at a relatively early stage. The use of blogs in the classroom has been driven by a variety of forces, among them the desire to motivate students by tapping into literacy practices that resonate more with their lives (Yancey, "Made" 302). Those studying the use of blogs in the classroom have evoked various themes: the remediation of previous genres into new media, the blurring of the personal and the public, the potential for collaboration and feedback, and the possibilities for focusing on writing process on the blog instead of a final, polished product.

In the following discussions, I will overview some of the research in rhetoric and composition on blogs, organized around the two major themes I have identified here: blogs as new media and blogs in the classroom. As I have noted, work in the field is nascent, so I draw mostly from essays in *Into the Blogosphere*, as well as articles from *Kairos* and *Computers and Composition Online*, and other journals with pedagogical intent. It is also worth noting that research on blogs in rhetoric and composition does not exist in a vacuum, but is often interdisciplinary and draws from a larger body of work in the humanities and social sciences. Even the contributors to *Into the Blosophere* come from a variety of fields, including information sciences (Herring et al., "Women"), communication research (Ó Baoill), and psychology (Blanchard). Because of this, while I will be largely focused on research from rhetoric and composition in the following sections, I will also draw from work on blogs from outside fields.

Blogs as New Media

When focusing on blogs as new media, researchers have raised various questions about the genealogy of blogs as a genre, about the possibilities for developing online communities, about the potentials for the blogosphere as a public sphere, and about the inclusiveness of blogging and its democratic potential. That new media are changing the way we communicate has been well established in rhetoric and composition, as well as in other fields. In *The Second Media Age*, media historian Mark Poster shows that new media provides a new form of communication technology that can be understood and studied differently than prior broadcast communications, such as television, film, and radio (3). In *Redmediation: Understanding New Media*, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin introduce the concept of *remediation*, where previous content or genre conventions are placed into new media — that is, new media "refashion old media" and consequently change them (2-15). While it has been established that new media are changing communication and relations, it isn't yet clear how. Questions remain: How are issues of privacy and publicness at play? How inclusive are online media such as blogs, and do issues of difference and discrimination play out differently online than offline? Are communities online possible? Does the blogosphere provide potential for meaningful, democratic discourse?

Because, as I have noted, the definition of blogs often rests on conflations of form, content, and purpose, a discussion of the research on blogs and genre is in order. From Carolyn Miller's description of genre in her 1984 seminal essay "Genre as Social Action," we can understand that a genre is not merely form plus substance, but rather the exigence coming out of a recurrence of social situations (158). Certainly blogs have been classified together as a genre based on form; definitions almost always note the format of blog posting, time stamping, the availability of commenting, and the way in which the most recent posts are at the top of the webpage. Miller has continued her scholarly interest in genre, as reflected in her contribution, co-authored with Dawn Shepherd, to *Into the Blogosphere*. In “Blogging as Social Action,” Miller and Shepherd found that “[m]ost commentators define blogs on the basis of their reverse chronology, frequent updating, and combination of links with personal commentary.” The editors of *Into the Blogosphere*, for example, define blogs as:

> web sites that are updated frequently, most often with links to other sites and commentary on the other sites’ content. The content of blogs combine musings, memories, jokes, reflections on research, photographs, rants, and essays, though we would argue that it is not the nature of the content that defines it. [...] What characterizes blogs are their form and function: all posts to the blog are time-stamped with the most recent post at the top, creating a reverse chronological structure governed by spontaneity and novelty. (Gurak et al., “Introduction”)

Gurak et al.’s definition is explicit in its denial of content as a qualification for blogs and its focus on form; it leaves purpose out entirely, as do other definitions. Most of these definitions describe blogs as *form* and not as *genre*. Miller and Shepherd write, “It is when bloggers discuss the purpose of the blog, its function and value as social action involving rhetors and audiences, that the nature of the generic blog becomes problematic.”

When researching the ways in which bloggers talk and write about blogs, Miller and Shepherd found that many espoused “the ability to combine the immediately real and the genuinely personal,” to share “personal thoughts” and self-expression. “The 'reality' offered by blogs,” they continue, “is thus a thoroughly perspectival reality, anchored in the personality of the blogger. And although this reality [...] may seem to be 'immediate,' (that is, *un*-mediated), it is, of course, highly mediated." There is a believed transparency about blogs, a belief in the transparency of the thoughts and expression of the individual. Miller and Shepherd ask, "Is what is truly novel in the blog the ability to address simultaneously these dual yet mutually reinforcing purposes, to engage in self-expression *in order* to build community and to build community *in order* to cultivate the self?"

In her 1973 "Generic Constraints and the Rhetorical Situation" (an essay responding to the discussion of Lloyd Bitzer's "The Rhetorical Situation"), Kathleen M. Hall Jamieson claims "that perception of the proper response to an unprecedented rhetorical situation grows *not merely from the situation* but also from antecedent rhetorical forms" (163, emphasis original). Thus, we can understand new genres (genres as always evolving) through their genealogical ancestors. We can understand the papal encyclical by understanding its roots in the Roman Imperial Decree, and we can understand the presidential inauguration speech through its ancestor the sermon (168). For understanding blogs, ancestral genres are important, especially because of the recent rise in the new form. Miller and Shepherd agree, noting that "The ancestral genres should be considered part of the rhetorical situation to which the rhetor responds, constraining the perception and definition of the situation and its decorum for both the rhetor and the audience." Blogs can be understood through a variety of ancestral genres, including the commonplace book, research logs, navigation logs, clipping services, editorials, opinion columns, pamphlets and broadsides, the Wunderkammer, anthologies, and journals and diaries (Miller and Shepherd). Because Miller and Shepherd are most interested in the intersections of public and private, they focus their work on more diaristic or journalistic blogs, those blogs that find their exigence in "some widely shared, recurrrent need for cultivation and and validation of the self."

However, as they note, the idea of blogs as one genre has become problematic: "Perhaps the blog is already evolving into multiple genres, meeting difference exigences for different rhetors — journalists, teenagers, the high-tech community, etc." Journalism blogs (j-blogs), tech support blogs, political campaign blogs, and knowledge logs (k-logs) each possibly constitute new sub-genres or genres whose exigence is different from the desire to cultivate the self (Miller and Shepherd). As blogs have become more ubiquitous and popular, it has become even more obvious that they constitute different genres; this is especially true when we consider blogs that, while maintaining the form (most recent post at the top, ability to leave comments), are merely an advertising platform for companies. The exigence is clearly not grounded in personal work, but in corporate work, with the goal to sell and realize financial profit.[2] Miller and Shepherd's work — understanding blogs through the lens of genre — raises a variety of questions for scholarship, including about issues of privacy and publicness, as well as what exigencies give rise to blogs. These are issues which I take up in Chapter 3.

Because of the social nature of blogs, the question of community is of interest to rhetoric scholars. In her contribution to *Into the Blogosphere*, "Blogs as Virtual Communities: Identifying a Sense of Community in the *Julie/Julia Project*," psychologist Anita Blanchard asks whether blogs can be virtual communities, using Julie Powell's blog *The Julie/Julia Project* as a case study. Virtual communities are important, Blanchard argues, because they can help people make connections when they feel isolated, because an online sense of community can sometimes translate into increased participation in one's local community, and because a sense of community can increase the likelihood of a blog's continuance and readership participation. Blanchard concludes that a blog can be a virtual community "when there are a) a minimal number of b) public interactions c) with a variety of communicators in which d) there is a minimal level of sustained membership over a period of time," as well as a sense of community among readers and bloggers (Blanchard, citing Q. Jones). Also, Blanchard discusses the possibilities for virtual communities within groups of blogs:

> Interactive blogrolls connecting blogs with highly active comments' sections may create communities of blogs who share an audience. If this interlinking of blogs develops around particular topics, it is possible that a sense of community may develop and be shared between these interactive blogs. This will decrease the dependence of the virtual community on any one blog author and increase the chances of viability for the virtual blog community as a whole. (Blanchard)

In addition to community, the role blogs might play in a more inclusive, democratic public sphere has been a topic among scholars. In his *Into the Blogosphere* article "Weblogs and the Public Sphere," communications scholar Andrew Ó Baoill describes the impacts of weblogs on the public sphere. Using three criteria of the ideal public sphere, as outlined by Jürgen Habermas, Ó Baoill sees limitations for the potential of the blogosphere to be a democratic public sphere. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas describes the three criteria Ó Baoill uses: participants disregard the social status of others and instead focus on the better argument, new issues of public concern can be raised, and the public sphere is inclusive (Habermas, *Structural* 36-37). Noting the time commitment that blogs take, the limited access to the Internet, the demographics of Internet users ("younger, wealthier, and more educated than the offline population" [qting. Rodríguez]), the prevalence of a limited amount of topics discussed on blogs, the reliance of blogs on mainstream media, the way much of news is reproduced through memes rather than discussion (that is, content is reproduced —

imitated — from blog to blog instead of actually discussed), and the privileging of A-list bloggers, Ó Baoill concludes that there are various limitations to the role of weblogs in the public sphere. Concludes Ó Baoill:

> There is hope that future generations of aggregation and reading technology will help to combat some of these issues. However, such technologies must walk a thin line between serving the individual interests of readers and providing them with only that which fits a commodified profile. (Ó Baoill)

The potential of the blogosphere as a public sphere is key to my discussion in Chapter 2.

In his essay, Ó Baoill engages of the work of political and Internet scholars Way Rash, Jr. and Richard Davis regarding inclusiveness online. Rash, in *Politics on the Nets: Wiring the Political Process*, holds an optimistic view:

> [P]eople searching for viewpoints on a topic of their choice will have the opportunity to see every group's position on that topic, not just the view of the major groups. In effect, the nets have become a sort of virtual village green, on which any idea can be discussed and addressed on its merits. (Rash 100)

Ó Baoill is skeptical, for reasons outlined above, and refers to Richard Davis's *The Web of Politics*, in which Davis believes that the Internet may in fact exacerbate power differences: "The gap between the politically active and the inactive will grow larger. The Internet will offer greater advantages to a political elite while simultaneously erecting another barrier to participation for those who are uninterested and uninvolved" (Davis 184).

Gender is another issue of inclusiveness. In "Women and Children Last: The Discursive Construction of Weblogs," information sciences scholars Susan Herring et al. note that while many in both academia and in the popular media are claiming that blogs are a democratizing force, there has been little empirical data to back this up. They focus their data on an apparent paradox: many are claiming that there are more female bloggers than male, yet most research and media focus on male bloggers. Their research found that there is pretty much parity between the number of males and females who blog, but males who blog are more commonly featured in media because of the privileging of filter blogs over personal or diaristic blogs. Herring et al.

> argue that by privileging filter blogs and thereby implicitly evaluating the activities of adult males as more interesting, important, and/or newsworthy than those of other blog authors, public discourses about weblogs marginalize the activities of women and teen bloggers, thereby indirectly reproducing societal sexism and ageism, and misrepresenting the fundamental nature of the weblog phenomenon. (“Women”)

Blog authors themselves even perpetuate this inequality by linking to “A-list” authors who are predominantly males. Clancy Ratliff, co-editor of *Into the Blogosphere*, author of a dissertation on blogging, and host of the well-known academic blog *Culture Cat*, discovered that, in the blogrolls from the top ten blogs, only 16% of links led to blogs hosted by females (“Whose Voices”). Herring et al. claim that this disparity is caused, in part, by the fact that online gender dynamics reflect the gender disparity offline; by the valuation of the individual author, which is an androcentric concept; and by our society’s devaluing of personal journal-writing. Since personal journal-writing and self expression are more common on blogs than filter and political discourse — for males as well as females — Herring et al. make a call for more attention to these “typical” blogs “in order to understand the real motivations, gratifications, and societal effects of this growing practices” and to have a “broader conception of weblogs.” Perhaps blogs are democratizing in relation to gender because as many women as men blog, but obviously the blogs our society is valuing are those written by men.

While in early stages, research on blogs as new media has raised a variety of questions: What different exigencies give rise to blogs? In what new ways are people using blogs, and for what purposes? What types of blogs are being valued by the general public and by scholars? What motivates this valuation? How prevalent are virtual communities in the blogosphere, and is community the model we wish to promote on blogs? How can a more inclusive, democratic discussion be fostered on blogs? When considering the inclusiveness of blogs, how can we further understand the ways in which straight, white male voices are privileged and help to promote more inclusion? How much do new technologies and software in blogs affect the ways we hold discussion? Do they privilege individual consumption and interests or is there the potential for deeper connections and discussion between people? What are the potentials for and possible negative repercussions of the blurring of the private and public that weblogs seem to promote? These are questions which continue to provoke academic inquiry and which we must keep in mind as we implement blogging in the classroom.

Blogs in the Writing Classroom

While it is my sense that many writing teachers are using blogs in the classroom, published research and reflection on this practice is also nascent. Writing teachers who use blogs tend to focus on the potential for public writing, for emphasizing writing process over final product, for peer review, for creating "habits of writing," and for helping students understand genre. Most discussions of blogs in the classroom focus on first-year composition, though some scholarship has also focused on the roles of blogs in upper level courses and graduate courses. In his *Computers and Composition Online* article "Blogs, a Primer," writing program administrator Barclay Barrios promotes using blogs in the classroom because their use can promote technological literacy, help students navigate their own informal and formal electronic writing, and creates an "addictive" habit of writing (12). He notes that blogs can be used as a new medium for traditional classroom work, including journaling, developing voice and ethos, collaboration, group discussion, peer review, and research (13).

Arguing against the common concept of the private writer with private journaling, in their contribution to *Into the Blogosphere*, Charles Lowe and Terra Williams explain their use of blogs to help students interact with each other's writing in a more public way. They draw on the work of Kenneth Bruffee, who argues that students should share and talk about their writing and reading. Bruffee writes, "If thought is internalized public and social talk, then writing of all kinds is internalized social talk made public and social again. If thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized" (422). Lowe and Williams add, "Blogging, then, with its networked, informal conversational style, is less thought, and more *externalized* public and social talk" (emphasis original). In their classes at Purdue University and Arizona State University, their students' blog entries included personal explorations, reading responses, links to web articles they found interesting, responses to research, and off-topic journaling. They conclude that "weblogs can facilitate a collaborative, social process of meaning making," noting a few benefits of using blogs in the classroom, including giving voice to students who are too shy to speak up in class, allowing students to "create their own social support network" (qting. Anson and Beach), the development of an "ongoing conversation [that] becomes the voice of that community," the potential to "share invention," the development of a real audience outside the teacher, and a focus on process that doesn't occur with other webtexts that focus on the final product.

Other scholars on blogs and classroom pedagogy have focused on the ways in which blogs can help students understand genre. Understanding genre is also important for students; as Miller notes, “for the student, genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community” (165). For Kevin Brooks, Cindy Nichols, and Sybil Priebe, when we consider blogs and their import for the classroom, we need to also consider the genres we wish to remediate in the classroom — that is, what social situations recur in the classroom that would give rise to the exigencies of certain blogging genres. Remediation, as used by Brooks, Nichols, and Priebe in their contribution to *Into the Blogosphere*, “Remediation, Genre, and Motivation,” involves the transfer of one genre to a new medium. They write, “The web is remediating all media that has come before it (print, music, film, television, radio, paintings, email, etc.); therefore... we wanted to emphasize... that weblogging is not a radically new way of writing, but a repurposing of familiar... print genres” (Brooks, Nichols, and Priebe, citing Bolter and Grusin). Brooks, Nichols, and Priebe focus their article on how blogs remediate three specific genres: the journal, the filter, and the notebook — the three genres they observed were most remediated in their own blogging activity and the three genres they focused on in their writing courses. Additionally, they are most interested in student motivation, and found that students were more drawn to journaling over the other two remediated genres because of familiarity, with the exception of blogging on community blogs, where students began to favor notebook-style writing, which allowed them to be in more conversation with each other. They found that the filter genre was more complex than they had assumed and there was student resistance to remediating this genre in weblogs.

Others as well have written about using blogs in the classroom. Richard Ferdig and Kaye Trammell write in “Content Delivery in the ‘Blogosphere’” that “[b]logs are useful teaching and learning tools because they provide a space for students to reflect and publish their thoughts and understandings" (1). Blogs are more beneficial than discussion boards, they argue, because a student can have her own individual blog that serves as a "soapbox," unlike discussion boards, which are not individually owned (2). Because blogs are public, they also open up discussion beyond the student-teacher relationship so that others are reading and responding to student writing (3). In her "Talk at Brown" University, posted on her weblog, Jill Walker discusses "how blogging is not simply keeping an electronic journal, it's distributed and collaborative; it's learning to think and write with the network." By using blogs in the classroom, we can teach students "*network literacy*: writing in a distributed, collaborative environment" ("Talk at Brown," emphasis original).

In "Writing and Citizenship," film scholar and blogger Charles Tryon discusses his use of blogs in his first-year composition course. He puts blogs in the context of his general goals of helping students "make and support arguments" and see "that writing — and citizenship — matters" (128). He asked students to perform a rhetorical analysis of another blog and post it to the course blog; this led to feedback from those whose blogs were analyzed and a larger conversation outside of the class. Tryon writes that his "students felt validated when outsiders commented on their blog entries," and that the class was able to have a rich discussion about the discursive rules of blogs as a genre (130).

Rebekah Shultz Colby et al., in "A Role for Blogs in Graduate Education," explore the implications of using a blog in their graduate level rhetoric and composition coursework. They begin by noting that the public debate provided by the rhetorical tradition has not been really public at all because the tradition has been embedded with exclusion. The authors share their experience remediating the rhetorical tradition in blogs through discussions of the themes of the salon, performance, and the agora. Colby et al. found that their course blog served as a salon where the lines of private and public were mixed. Rebeka Colby shares her experience of blurring the lines between personal experience and emotion and high theory, writing:

> Certainly, as a graduate student, by disrupting the binary between public and private writing, blogs gave me a forum for writing in which I could connect the often-seemingly impersonal and abstract ideas of theory with my own life so that I could more fully understand them and better situate myself as a scholar. (Colby et al.)

Blogs, she argues, offer a place for what Janice Hindman calls "embodied writing": the "discursive practice of recover[y]ing this essential[ist] tension between oppositional selves and positions" (Hindman, qtd. in Colby et al.). Fellow author Justin Felix also saw blogs as a useful supplement to discussion in the graduate level classroom, especially because traditional writing in a course, such as term papers, often do not facilitate discussion. Robin Murphy adds that blogs allow for graduate students to enter the academic conversation in a more inexpensive (even free) manner than attending conferences, and that blog posts often voice the *risk* she takes when she is writing — a risk to make new connections that she doesn't feel she takes in class discussion (Colby et al.).

The question of why blogs might be more pedagogically effective than other online discussion forums in scholarship has raised interesting issues not only about blogs, but also the writing classroom itself. To return to Krause's 2004 *Kairos* article, he writes: "I've come to believe we shouldn't substitute blogs for other electronic writing tools that foster discussion and interactive writing, particularly email lists, commonly known as 'listservs'" (Krause). Collin Brooke's essay "Weblogs as Deictic Systems" is, in part, a response to Krause, and not only Krause's frustration with weblogs, but also Clancy Ratliff's expectations that the use of blogs in the classroom should accomplish the goals of community building, collaborative writing, and interactivity among students. While "[t]here is nothing 'wrong'" with Ratliff's or Krause's expectations, Brooke believes that perhaps a problem lies in that teachers are desiring blogs to do "inward" work even as they are outside of the classroom. Teachers are using blogs to try to meet a real need of "cohesion," but perhaps blogs aren't the problem when they fail to help develop cohesion. Brooke writes:

> But where Krause writes that "we shouldn't substitute blogs for other electronic writing tools that foster discussion and interactive writing," I would say instead that "we shouldn't expect from blogs the same kinds of discussion and interactive writing we associate with other electronic writing tools." This is a small change, perhaps, but a crucial one, I think. This observation, that weblogs are not as effective as listservs at doing what listservs do, leads productively to the question of what blogs *qua* blogs can accomplish for us in our classrooms. (Brooke)

Drawing from the work of Will Richardson, Brooke argues that we shouldn't be asking whether we can fit blogs into the classroom, but instead "we should be thinking about those classrooms and about whether or not they provide the kinds of spaces that allow for the full possibilities of blogging." The problem with viewing blogs as glorified discussion boards, as Krause and others have (see, for example, psychologist John Grohol's article "Psychology of Blogs (Weblogs): Everything Old is New Again"), is that it focuses blogs as inward movers of knowledge (what Brooke terms "centripetal" forces, or "expert systems," where users send knowledge toward a system) instead of outward movers of knowledge. This outward knowledge movement is, in Brooke's words, "centrifugal," a system of "intelligent agents," in which a user sends knowledge to other agents, who use that knowledge outside of the system. This, to Brooke, is the difference between a blog and other, inward-looking discussion boards: the potential to expand the circulation of knowledge outside of the classroom.

There are certain themes that permeate most of these discussions of blogs in the classroom. One of the most pertinent, though, is the restated belief that blogs constitute a blurring of the personal and public; they remediate the journal, a traditionally personal and private genre, and make it open to the public. The blog, then, can help to circulate classroom knowledge and discussion into a larger public than just the classroom. Additionally, there is a shared belief that blogs are not "final products," but rather part of the process of writing — that the work done on blogs can be a place for collaboration among students to share their writing and provide each other with feedback, whether this is done with peer review as the goal or with rich discussion as a goal.

Questions, too, are raised. What are the effects of this "blurring" of private and public, and what resistances will students have to such a blurring? What can we learn from blogs that help to create a centrifugal classroom? How can blogs help us meet both centrifugal and centripetal forces or goals? How can blogs be used to enter conversations that are occurring outside of the classroom? When asking students to blog, what genres do wish to discuss, evoke, and remediate in a writing class? How can blogs help students understand the circulation and reproduction of writing? With a richer understanding of blogs, what can we learn from blogs that might affect the way we teach? This may include the writing we value, the structuring of the course, and the circulation of knowledge within and outside the classroom.

Questions I Plan to Explore

While these questions raised at the end of the two previous discussions warrant further research and thought, I do not intend to explore and answer each of these questions, but some of them have informed the questions that guide my work here. To re-state the questions I asked earlier in this chapter:

- How can we best understand the blogosphere as a potential public sphere — in ways that are most inclusive and democratic? How would this understanding of the blogosphere affect our understanding of what kinds of public writing could be produced in the classroom?
- How can we best understand blogs as public writing? This may mean understanding that the blog does not constitute a single genre; if we understand some blogs as genealogical descendants of other public writing (as opposed to the private writing of journals, diaries, commonplace books, and notebooks, as scholars have most often suggested), what can we learn about blogs? What do the tensions between private and public teach us about blogs and classroom writing? How does this affect writing in the composition classroom?
- What does it mean to promote democratic life in classroom writing? How does this affect the pedagogies enacted in a classroom? Specifically, if we look for blogs as potential democratic public discourse and for ways to extend discourse outside of the classroom, what does this mean for actual practices in the classroom?

Overview of Thesis

These questions guide the organization of this thesis. In Chapter 2, I begin by overviewing the tradition of composition's engagement in the public before entering a discussion of public spheres, drawing from the works of critical theorist Jürgen Habermas and feminist critical theorists Nancy Fraser and Iris Marion Young, who critique and amend Habermas's work. I then explore some criteria for understanding the blogosphere as a public sphere, or as a public of publics. There are many metaphors used to describe the blogosphere, and in this chapter I discuss these metaphors before offering an alternative, that of *the blogosphere as an ideal city*, drawing on the work of Iris Marion Young and her description of the ideal city as the ideal space for public discourse and democratic dialogue. This metaphor, I argue, does not in itself serve to make the blogosphere an inclusive, democratic public sphere, nor does it ignore the material reality of the city, but instead provides a model for ways of traversing the blogosphere.

In Chapter 3, I argue for the historicization of blogs through a genealogical ancestor, the self-published magazine, or zine. Blogs have been historicized through many genres (diaries, journals, filters, and notebooks, in particular), but I am more interested in self-published work that explicitly and intentionally engages in the public, such as zines, magazines, newspapers, and broadsides. In order to narrow this concept, I focus on the 1970s radical queer zine *Fag Rag*, published out of Boston, and discuss the ways in which it is productive to understand the blog as genealogical descendent of the zine: in relation to exigence, audience, privacy and publicity, multimodality, and challenges to traditional notions of authorship. From this discussion, I draw some pedagogical implications for the writing classroom in regards to asking students to write for a public audience, reproducing exigencies in the classroom, discussing the private/public dichotomy in the classroom, viewing authorship as editorship and designing, and interrogating the relationship between circulation and production.

Building off the work of the previous two chapters, I propose some material practices for using blogs in the classsroom in Chapter 4 before concluding with some speculations and questions about blogs. Between chapters I have included interchapters — brief explorations of certain aspects of my overall analysis. Between Chapters 2 and 3, I explore the rhetoric of moving in the blogosphere, drawing on Michel de Certeau's "Walking in the City," and how that relates to the metaphor of the city I discuss in Chapter 2. In the interchapter after Chapter 3, I use some of the conclusions I make about blogs as descendent from zines as I discuss a particular blog, *Feministing*, which I consider might be a useful model for public discourse and composition. The first interchapter in this thesis, however, is a literacy and technology narrative that explores my own literate activities that have led up to and influenced my own blogging.

Interchapter 1
A Sisyphean Task:
A Self Technology and Literacy Narrative

> Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory […]. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" 121, 123)

> I write because I feel politically committed, because I would like to convince other people, without lying to them, that what I dream about and what I speak about and what causes me to struggle are *worth* writing about…. That is, when we write, we cannot ignore our condition as historical beings. We cannot ignore that we are beings inserted into the social structures in which we participate as objects and subjects. (Paulo Freire, qtd. in Yagelski, *Literacy Matters* 89)

I tell the following narrative because it represents a sort of genealogy of my entry into blogging. Blogging has become, for me, an intersection of various other literate activities and technologies throughout my life, including my involvement in popular avant garde music, zines, experimental academic writing, and the cityscape. As Sarah Sloane argues in "The Haunting Story of J: Genealogy as a Critical Category in Understanding How a Writer Composes," "our experiences with paper-based textual artifacts haunt our contemporary awareness of what computer writing technologies can do" (52), though I would add that other texts, such as audio and visual ones, also "haunt" this awareness. I also tell this narrative, in a way, to give some context to my own situation as a blogger, zinester, and academic, through my experiences growing up on a farm, being a student, protesting war, and developing various "selves." In "Blinded by the Letter: Why Are We Using Literacy as a Metaphor for Everything Else?", Anne Wysocki and Johndan Johnson-Eilola urge us to view information as "something we move (and hence think) within," emphasizing space over time (363). They continue:

> If we understand communication not as discrete bundles of stuff that are held together in some unified space, that exist linearly through time, and that we pass along, but as instead different possible constructed relations between information that is spread out before us, then... living becomes movement among (and within) sign systems. (365)

In this way, information is in spatial relation to other information, and negotiating that information is a matter of movement. Our movement through and within this information, too, is informed by our own experience with prior information or media.[3]

I grew up on a farm outside of a small Iowan town, which, to someone as disaffected with small town life as I was, felt incredibly isolating. My friends and I began to develop a sense that in our town, difference was something to be squelched. In this town, queers didn't exist but in our imagination (and they were disgusting), black people — except those who acted white enough — were "niggers" (it was a secret from my father when my cousin first started dating a black man), and no one understood why a "respectable" young man like myself would have long hair — to cite a few examples. In rural Iowa, there weren't many outlets for expressing difference, nor were there many resources for finding others who were different either — so, many of us turned to the city for models of difference. My friends and I would listen to CD's bought in the nearest city — an hour and a half's drive away — and listen to the alternative rock radio station from the same city. The reception for the station faded in and out, and it often struggled with a competing station on the same frequency (this one from another nearby city, two hours in the opposite direction), making listening very frustrating. We looked for models of being and living that existed outside of the countryside and somehow resonated with us as we grew and changed throughout adolescence. Whether it was the alternative rock scene out of Seattle, the straightedge (a hardcore punk movement involving no substance use) scenes out of Washington, D.C., and Europe, the 1980s punk-ska movement in Britain, or the Christian punk music that located cultural criticism within the urban architecture of streets, cars, and consumerism — we found models of rebellion that existed outside of what, at the time, seemed like a totalizing small town.

Four technological changes in my life seemed to converge between 1994 and 1997. The first was the introduction of the Internet in our school district, starting in three computers located in the library my seventh grade year and expanding to computer labs by my ninth grade year. The second was the introduction of a dial-up modem at my parents' house later in the 90s, which gave me late night access to the Internet. In retrospect, the access speed was slow, but at the time, it felt like a grand novelty that gave me access to worlds previously unknown: websites about goths, piercing, music, clothing. At the time, the Internet, for me, was largely about consumption. I didn't buy anything online at the time, but I was consuming information and, with the exception of email and instant messenger, not composing online. I saw that others composed online, through the personal websites hosted on Geocities that almost always seemed to pop up at the top of my Lycos and Yahoo searches. But I never turned to creating my own site, mostly out of lack of knowledge of how to do so.

The third technological change in my life was my first tape deck in 1994 and my first CD player in 1997. Because technology on the farm was largely about use-value, I came later than most of my peers to CD's and music. We were one of the first people in my county to get a car phone, because they were useful for communicating when out in the field, but one of the last to get a CD player, because — well, we could listen to the radio. Reflecting on that time, it was an odd paradox to be on the farm and ahead of the town kids in so many technological aspects (car phone, multiple home computers, satellite television) and so behind in others (I was the last person I knew to get a Nintendo, a cassette player, or a CD player).

The fourth technological change in this period of my life was the introduction not of a new technology but of a re-conception of a technology I was well aware of: print media. My friend Billy, who was instrumental in introducing me to punk and ska culture, one day introduced me to something the likes of which I don't recall seeing before: a self-published magazine on newsprint called a *zine*. The sixth issue of *Happy Goat*, from 1998, is the first zine I remember reading: a 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" newsprint zine filled with interviews of small bands I'd never heard of, rants expressing anger at a rigid, alienating society, and short essays urging disaffected readers to get up and do something. I had never seen something like this, outside of books we had made in school of our own fictional stories in elementary, stapled together and then put away in chests or the attic at home. *Happy Goat* was different: It wasn't school-sponsored, but was written and produced by a couple of high school students out of Ankeny, Iowa. The rag wasn't pretty: zine reviews, pictures, and rants had been cut out and taped onto the page in a collage manner, and the voices in the zine expressed anger and resentment, as well as hope. I was told to "make a **fucking** change" by Lane, that "YOU CAN DRAW" by BrANDoN MOOSE!, and that the government was encroaching in our lives by Jason. Lane's column was about getting involved and moving beyond apathy:

> I'm fuckin' choosing my own path in life. We're not wasting our lives anymore. Change their conception of us, <u>get in-fuckin'-volved</u>. [...] Don't let people discriminate against you on the basis of looks, just cause you've got 9 inch tall liberty spikes doesn't qualify you as subhuman. When society knocks you down, <u>get back up</u>; when your [*sic*] told you won't

> amount to anything, tell yourself <u>you can</u>; when society belittles you, calls you stupid, a menace, a nuisance, a moron, flip them off and kick em in the ballsack. ("make a **fucking** change," n.p.)

Happy Goat #6 was about taking chances and moving beyond apathy in order to make change in your life. Jason wrote about taking chances, and how without taking chances, he would have never gotten into punk rock or started reading and making zines ("Chance," n..p.). In fact, in a "Happy Goat Fact," Jason reveals that issue #1 of *Happy Goat* got him suspended from school for three days.

Soon I was reading zines from various cities across the Midwest, including Detroit, Chicago, Des Moines, and Milwaukee. Billy started a zine, *Notnivy*, to which I contributed stories and articles. The cover of *Notnivy* included parody ads and false story blurbs, much like *The Onion*, but inside were stories about our lives. My contributions were usually fictional and fantasy, but other contributions were about being punk in a small town, about navigating life, about other zines that were interesting, and about music. Through reading zines, buying CD's produced by small distributors (called distros) or by the bands themselves, and seeing Billy produce his zine, I began to realize that culture was not just about consumption, but that we, as youth in an alienating small town, could have a role in the production of culture, and share the ways we viewed the world. This was something that I didn't seem to learn in school.

The first do-it-yourself product I remember designing was the CD of my friend Billy's band Luster shortly after graduating high school. Determined that there should be an artifact to remember the band with, a way to record that they were here, a friend and I spent long days designing the CD insert and cover art, as well as a lot of money I had saved up, to produce the CD, titled *Smile and Nod*, an eclectic mix of alternative rock, jazz, punk, hardcore, and ska — all composed by Luster. I now view that CD as a way to validate our own high school experiences — a record that states "we were here."

After high school, I went off to college at Iowa State. Billy eventually moved to Chicago where he began a zine distro and produced a new zine, *Proof I Exist* — a title which echoes explicitly the exigence of zines I discuss in Chapter 3: the validation of the self. I returned to zines in 2002 as I became active in the peace movement at ISU. Asking other activists and friends to contribute essays, poetry, and art, I produced my first zine, *Pax Americana*, which contained discussions of peace, pacificism, and the situation in Iraq. I later began a personal zine, *Sisyphean Task*, which I see as the precursor of my first blog. I chose the title because I understood Sisyphus, as Albert Camus does, as happy in his struggle, and I equated both living and writing as a Sisyphean task in which the journey, not the goal, is what is rewarding. *Sisyphean Task*, which I continue to publish when I can make time, is composed of essays, stories, collages, poems, and fragments that either reflect an aspect of my life or share my thinking on specific topics. When I first conceived of *Sisyphean Task*, I viewed it mostly in terms of self-expression, but as my publishing has continued, I've begun to view it more as staking a claim in the making of meaning in the world.

My perspective on my blogging activity took a similar route: from a belief in self-expression to a belief in meaning-making. I began blogging early in 2004 — not because I read many blogs, but because a friend of mine had started one and it seemed cool. My early blogging activity seemed to be fully from the exigence Miller and Shepherd describe as the "need for cultivation and validation of the self." That my blogging mirrored my zine activity is most evident in that I chose to title my personal blog the same as my zine: *Sisyphean Task*. As I developed some html skills and began reading other blogs, I began to write more explicitly in relation to other writers and turned to other genres besides the journal in my blog: critiques, essays, reviews, and editorializing. My writing on my blog has been, in the words of Sloane, "haunted by prior versions of writing, writing instruments, writing situations, and [myself]" (52). For example, some blog posts I wrote felt very similar to writing letters to the editor or writing a guest column for the student newspaper, only with the added benefit of more immediate feedback and interaction with others online.

By the time I found myself in graduate school at Oregon State and enrolled in Lisa Ede's Language, Culture, and Technology course in 2005, I had been blogging for a year and a half, read at least twenty blogs regularly, and contributed to a few others. While I was an active blogger outside of class and on the course's blog, it was not until I read Andrea Lunsford's *The Everyday Writer* that it occurred to me that a blog could be used as a log for research. Lunsford writes, "You might prefer to begin a Web log (blog) for your research project. You can use it to record your thoughts on the reading you are doing, and especially, add links from there to Web sites, documents, and articles you have found online" (143). With the help of Oregon State's Technology Across the Curriculum program, I began *A Collage of Citations* on my OSU webspace. Having my research on a blog definitely changed the way I wrote papers (for example, I didn't have to worry about losing note cards or not finding something in my notebook), but over time, I found that blogging was allowing me to enter a network of online scholars who were researching the same things I was writing about: pedagogy, writing, and new media.

I received feedback from other scholars in the field, and began to engage in dialogue in relation to what others were writing online.

Blogging, perhaps more than any other literate activity I've engaged in (with the possible exception of my graduate school scholarship in rhetoric and composition), has shown me how deeply rooted writing is in creating the world and in identity formation. Whereas texts once seemed static and isolated from each other, blogs made it readily apparent that texts are fluid, in relation to each other, and do not exist in a vacuum. The Michael Faris who once balked at teachers who asked him to read excerpts of novels because it was somehow "violent" to the text now understood that all texts are fluid, made up of fragments, and that writing is social action in the world.

The process of writing involves selecting, collaging, and citing (hence the title *A Collage of Citations*), putting oneself in relation to others. It seems blogging was able to help teach me something that my undergraduate coursework didn't — or perhaps I wasn't listening. It seems, in retrospect, that I should have learned this long ago, from my affinity for writing, school, music, and cities. One of my favorite writing assignments, from my Teaching Writing course at Iowa State taught by Bob Tremmel, was a multigenre paper I wrote on Jamaican ska, a type of dance music popular in working class dance halls in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Jamaica. The multigenre paper, described by Tom Romano in *Writing with Passion: Life Stories, Multiple Genres*, involves writing in multiple genres and voices instead of a traditional, linear essay. I was drawn to ska because of its political nature, as ska artists often explicitly critique systems of racism, classism, and colonialism. I am surprised now that I didn't connect that *all* writing is a process of selecting, collaging, and citing when I wrote that paper. Writing that paper in various genres and voices, with quite a bit of source material cited, I now wonder how I missed this view of writing, especially given my paper's subject matter. Ska, with its genealogical ancestors in Jamaican mento, American R&B and swing, jazz, military drumming, and Rastafarian chants, is a music rooted in the multicultural city of Kingston that explicitly selects from and cites other musicians. It seems obvious to me now that, as both a fan and a student historian of ska, that I should have seen it as a model of writing.

Additionally, blogging has helped me to become aware of the various identities we perform, take on, and create. That I do not have a single identity, but various ones that are sometimes in conflict, seems like a truth I've known for years — since discussions in secondary school about the various "roles" we had to perform (son, friend, student, etc.). But blogging has made this explicit to me, and also has show the ways in which identity is tied up in discourse. As I wrote in one seminar paper on blogs and new media:

> This essay, like my blog posts, represents a negotiation of various voices. As I blog, I must negotiate my fragmented self: who is speaking? Is Michael the researcher speaking? Is Michael the teacher speaking? Is Michael the post-punk ironic vegan speaking? Is Michael the social justice activist speaking? Is Michael the college student speaking? *ad infinitum*. True, this voice is dependent upon my audience. Who do I imagine is going to read this? Who am I evoking as my reader? What is my purpose in writing?

As Robert Yagelski discusses in *Literacy Matters: Writing and Reading the Social Self*, literate activities are social in nature, and negotiating various discourses involves the fostering, defining, and negotiating of various selves (89-93). Through blogging, I have had to negotiate my various identities and voices, situating them with and against others, considering my audience. Sometimes this has been successful (as with the case of the conversation about homophobia I discussed in Chapter 1); other times the situation has felt disastrous and I became concerned that something I wrote, while appropriate for conversation with friends, might not be appropriate for my more public personas.

As I stated earlier, I didn't seem to learn in high school that writing could be used to be producers and agents in the world — to share one's views in the collective process of meaning-making — but instead learned it through the self-sponsored literate activities of others (zinesters and musicians, to begin with). Even in college, the power of writing seemed to be pacified; as John Trimbur argues in "Composition and the Circulation of Writing," the canon of delivery has largely been reduced in composition to a mere technical issue — the physical presentation — of writing, instead of as ethical and political in additional to technical. His desire is for "a democratic aspiration to devise delivery systems that circulate ideas, information, opinions, and knowledge and thereby expand the public forums in which people can deliberate on the issues of the day" (190). This neglect for delivery, I believe, has mollified writing and the agency of youth in the public. If the writing classroom does return to delivery — the circulation of student work outside of the classroom — what would this look like, especially with digital media like blogs? In the next chapter, I discuss the blogosphere's potential as a public sphere before discussing student writing in later chapters.

Chapter 2
The Blogosphere as an Ideal City:
The Pedagogical Value of a Normative Description of Blogs

> The tolerance, the room for great differences among neighbors — differences that often go far deeper than differences in color — which are possible and normal in intensely urban life, but which are so foreign to suburbs and pseudosuburbs, are possible and normal only when streets of great cities have built-in equipment allowing strangers to dwell in peace together on civilized but essentially dignified and reserved terms. (Jane Jacobs, qtd. in Young, *Justice* 226).

In "Rhetoric in the American College Curriculum: The Decline of Public Discourse," Michael Halloran describes the changes in the American rhetoric curriculum from the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century. He notes that late eighteenth century rhetoric classrooms returned to classical rhetoric, which privileged and emphasized public discourse and the disputation of public problems (246). The rhetoric curriculum was public in two senses: it dealt with public problems and it emphasized and attended to audience (255-256). Changes in curriculum over the nineteenth century, however, led to a privatization of rhetoric that left public, oral disputation behind in favor of an emphasis on aesthetics. Additionally, the traditional goals of public education — to meet the public needs of the community — shifted to the new goal of personal advancement of the individual. With the rise of specialization of fields, public rhetoric virtually disappeared, to be subsumed as written discourse within English departments (261-262). Published in 1982, Halloran's essay is a call for a return to engagement in public problems, to the rhetorical tradition that is "in essence a rhetoric of citizenship" (263).

This chapter is, in a way, an answer to that call, and an exploration of answer to questions I asked in Chapter 1: How can we best understand the blogosphere as a potential public sphere — in ways that are most inclusive and democratic? How would this understanding of the blogosphere affect our understanding of what kinds of public writing could be produced in the classroom? In this chapter, I will overview the tradition of composition theory's engagement in the public sphere, review the theory of the public sphere as first described by Jürgen Habermas and subsequent critiques by feminists and radical democrats Nancy Fraser and Iris Marion Young, determine criteria that scholars and teachers might use to understand the blogosphere as a public sphere, and then critique the metaphors used to describe the blogosphere, concluding that it would be useful view the blogosphere as an ideal city, as described by Iris Marion Young, in order to interact within it in a way that will facilitate the most democratic dialogue possible. I do so in order to consider what conditions might lead to more progressive communication online — in order to envision a normative description of the blogosphere as a public sphere that I believe will help teachers when considering public writing in the classroom and inform my discussion in later chapters.

Of course, I am not claiming that my work here is the first to address Halloran's critique of composition, nor is Halloran alone in calling for more public discourse in the composition classroom. In "Composition Is Not Rhetoric," Sharon Crowley argues that the modern composition classroom, especial first-year composition, "has nothing to do with rhetoric." She writes:

> [A]ny theoretical discourse that is entitled to be called "rhetoric" must at minimum conceive of rhetoric as an art of invention, that is, it must give a central place to the systematic discovery and investigation of the available

> arguments in a given situation. Furthermore, it must conceive of the arguments generated by rhetorical invention as both produced and circulated within a network of social and civic discourse, images, and events. As ancient rhetors such as Gorgias and Cicero argued in theory and personified in practice, any practice entitled to be called "rhetoric" must intervene in some way in social and civic discursive networks. (Crowley)

Crowley's criticism, coming twenty years after Halloran's essay, is another call for the invention and delivery of civic discourse in the composition classroom. As Kathleen Blake Yancey puts it, "if we believe that writing is social, shouldn't the system of circulation — the paths that the writing takes — extend beyond and around the single path from student to teacher?" ("Made" 310-311).

In *Moving Beyond Academic Discourse*, Christian Weisser provides a summary of the moves in Composition toward public writing in the classroom during the late twentieth century. These moves largely grew out of the work of critical pedagogy and cultural studies, some of which incorporated service learning. Weisser focuses much of his discussion on the works of Lester Faigley, Susan Wells, Paul Keilker, Bruce Herzbeg, and Ellen Cushman, seeing the work of these composition scholars as attempting to answer the call of Halloran for a return to civic engagement and public discourse (45). The move toward public writing owes a great deal of debt to the work of Brazilian critical pedagogue Paulo Freire, who, as Weisser notes, stressed the interconnections of education, civic action, and public discourse (37).

Lester Faigley, in *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition*, proposes a cultural studies approach to the teach of writing in order to return rhetoric to its tradition in public life. He writes:

> Proponents of a cultural studies curriculum [...] argue that it challenges the trend toward making exclusion the basis of education and defining higher

> education as the acquisition of narrowly specialized knowledge. They maintain that rather than setting out a content to be learned, a cultural studies curriculum explores the relations among cultural practices and the political interests of discourses. At the same time, however, the goal of reintroducing possibilities of public discourse through questioning the status quo makes the implementation of such a curriculum often difficult. (73)

Faigley asserts that while it might be difficult to implement public writing in the classroom, it is still a possibility and worth working toward in the writing curriculum. However, Faigley stops short of offering a theory of how we might implement public writing in the classroom or models for such writing.

Susan Wells, in "Rogue Cops and Health Care: What Do We Want from Public Writing?", does offer a more concrete concept of what public writing could look like in the writing classroom. In asking "What do we want from public writing?", Wells notes that

> for most of us, when we think about "public discourse," the public appears as a pre-existing forum where citizens make decisions face to face. That space is so intensely imagined that we think it must be real — just a little inaccessible, like live theatre or downtown department stores. (326)

This leads many writing instructors to assign "public writing" that is "writing for no audience at all," writing such as letters to non-existent editors or essays on controversial issues with no real audience— this view of public writing, she argues, ignores the complexity of the public sphere (328). Public discourse for Wells is "a complex array of discursive practices, including forms of writing, speech, and media performance, historically situated and contested" (328). Wells proposes four ways for the composition classroom to engage the public sphere: 1) viewing the classroom itself as a microcosm of the public sphere, where students can focus on the arts of persuasion, collaboration, and an understanding of audience and position; 2) analyzing public discourse, especially discourse from subaltern publics; 3) producing writing that enters the public sphere; and 4) in advanced composition courses, working with the public discourses of disciplines (338-339). The model Wells provides is easily applicable to blogs in the writing classroom and informs my discussion of practical application in Chapter 4.

Recent work in pedagogy has also made a turn to service learning, which, according to Aaron Schutz and Anne Ruggles Gere, grew out of student-organized service learning projects, and the involvement of university faculty came later (cited in Wiesser 53). Service learning projects take the critical engagement of cultural studies but insist that the classroom is not political enough if it does not incorporate civic engagement. Discussion, reflection, and action are all necessary components of service learning (Weisser 53). As Paul Heilker writes, teachers "need to relocate the *where* of composition instruction outside the academic classroom because the classroom does not and cannot offer students real rhetorical situations in which to understand writing as social action" (qtd. in Weisser 53, emphasis original). Weisser lists the benefits of service learning projects:

> Students gain academic credit, real-world applications for classroom concepts, real-world experience for résumés, and a personal investment in the community outside the university. Students are also supposed to develop skills in problem solving and critical thinking. In the process, they develop a more sophisticated analysis of society and their roles in it. The recipients are supposed to benefit through improved literacy or communication skills, new work capabilities, and multicultural awareness. (54)

An example of a service learning classroom is provided by J. Blake Scott in "Service-Learning and Cultural Studies." Scott describes his pedagogy that mixes service learning's engagement in the world with cultural studies' critique of texts. He follows Julie Drew's critique of cultural studies — that it does not focus on student production — and Thomas Deans's requirement that service learning involves critical reflection on the students' experiences (Scott 301, 303). Scott asks students a heuristic of questions in order to provoke students to "deliberate about how their texts impinge on and are transformed by the material practices of their users, paying particular attention to harmful effects and ethical problems" (305). Scott notes that his students' writing is more effective in the world because they are engaged in real-world production: "A magazine is unlikely to change its practices based on a student's letter of complaint, as in McComiskey's scenario [which proposes critiquing magazine ads]. I *have* seen agencies revise their discourse and practices based on input from service-learning students however; already situated as cowriters, these students had access to the agency's means of production" (305).

Weisser notes that there is a lot of potential for service learning, but it is often difficult, in part because scholars are still contesting over the term *public writing*, and what it means for the composition classroom. Weisser sees three views on the term *public writing*:

> To some, the public is a useful metaphor for how we might envision the writing classroom. For others, the public is something 'out there' that we and our students might attempt to enter through discourse. Some have already attempted to use public writing as a means for bringing about social change. (55)

Public writing, though a contested term, has become a focus of composition, and, more recently, this trend toward public writing has begun to ask questions of the Internet: can the Internet be utilized for public writing in the classroom?

As with any new technology, the Internet has been both lauded uncritically as liberatory and dismissed quickly as dehumanizing. In “Wired Words: Utopia, Revolution, and the History of Electronic Highways,” Marc Surman summarizes and deprecates the utopian drive of some technological theorists:

> From *Wired* to *Ladies Home Journal* to *The New York Times*, there is a sense of consensus about the revolutionality of our technological times. Although we can't quite agree on what it is, many of us seem to be convinced that "the information highway" will somehow transform our society into a better place. Some think it will fix health care and education. Others argue that — with enough wires, computers, and interactive television sets — we can revive our ailing democracies. Still others propose an end to crime, a new age of entrepreneurism, or a revitalization of community life. But whatever we're saying, we're all talking about the same thing — revolution. And talking about revolution feels *real* good. (Surman, emphasis original)

Of course, as Surman notes, it is not so simple to claim that a technological change is revolutionary or can lead to revolution. Surman’s dismissive remark, that “talking about revolution feels *real* good,” is indicative of our collective reactions to technology. As Dennis Baron argues, there have always been those who herald in new technologies as radical change, and those who fear new technologies and treat them with suspicion (17).

This is also true for writing teachers, many of whom acclaim the way that modern technologies have enhanced their classroom. Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe catalogue various ways in which computers are praised for enhancing the classroom, yet note that many teachers “have yet to realize...that electronic technology, unless it is considered carefully and used critically, can and will support any one of a number of negative pedagogical approaches” (“The Rhetoric of Technology” 130). They stress the importance of analyzing the use of computers in the classroom to see ways that they might enforce repressive pedagogies and ways that they might be used to improve pedagogy. Irene Ward, too, has stressed that "we must also remember that any technology has physical and economic limits, that historical context plays a great role in shaping how technology is used" (365).

In this thesis, I attempt to remain conscious of these humanistic tendencies to either view new technologies as utopian or apocalyptic. As an avid blogger, I am attempting here to be aware of my enjoyment and not advocate blogs uncritically, but rather to look for any true progressive potential in blogging. In this chapter, I draw on critical theory for its conceptions of the public sphere in order to understand the potential for change of what has been termed the blogosphere, and the use of blogs in the classroom. While blogs are not inherently liberatory, there is progressive potential in their use if they meet certain conditions: where there is an indefinite audience, the expectation that readers/listeners will respond, a heterogeneous populace, a coming and going of agents, and a variety of uses. In this regards, blogs are like any other form of communication: they can be used for both progressive or regressive purposes.

Before turning to an analysis of the blogosphere as a public sphere, I will turn to a discussion of critical theory and public sphere, as described by Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, and Iris Marion Young. The work of these three theorists has influenced my understanding of public spheres and of the blogosphere as a public sphere. Habermas's concepts of *communicative action* and the *lifeworld* — as well as Fraser and Young's contributions toward understanding inclusiveness, issues of difference, multiple publics, norms of discourse, private issues in the public sphere, and the possibilities for discourse that is not face-to-face — have been key to my conceptualization of public spheres.

Critical Theory and the Public Sphere: Habermas, Fraser, and Young

The work of Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* is the seminal work that drives many democratic theorists and practitioners to consider the importance of the public sphere. His work and its influence on subsequent critical theorists is most important in shifting the emphasis of critical theory from critiques of a "totally administered society" that focuses solely on instrumental reason and the ways in which communication from the state and market have replaced "those communication structures that had once made possible public discussion and self understanding by citizens and private individuals ("Tasks" 83, 90). Habermas and those who follow his work — of especial importance for my work are Iris Marion Young and Nancy Fraser — instead focus on conflicts between the system (instrumental reason, especially from the state and market) and the lifeworld (95). The lifeworld can be understood as the communicative experiences of citizens in their lives outside of state and market forces, where citizens communicate to create their own norms and values. In "The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society," Habermas writes that critical theory "is critical of the reality of developed societies inasmuch as they do not make full use of the learning potential culturally available to them, but deliver themselves over to an uncontrolled growth of complexity" (77). Habermas's contention is that our lifeworld is largely rational, and that it is being colonized by an overly complex system, and thus critical theory's role is to resist the colonization of the lifeworld by the market and the state, both of which use strategic action based on commodification and efficiency. In a welfare state with a pluralistic society, the question becomes whether a welfare state can live up to its goal:

> Its goal is the establishment of forms of life that are structured in an egalitarian way and that at the same time open up arenas for individual self-realization and spontaneity. But evidently this goal cannot be reached via the direct route of putting political programs into legal and administrative form. Generating forms of life exceeds the capacities of the medium of power. ("Crisis" 292)

Thus the state, through the medium of power, cannot foster new ways of life. Instead, these new ways of life must come from the lifeworld.

Mutual meaning making in the life world is achieved through what Habermas terms *communicative action*, defined as "the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations... [in which t]he actors seek to reach an understanding about the situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement" ("Social Action" 143). Conflict has not been pacified in society, as Theodor Adorno argues, but is rather abundant in the lifeworld:

> [T]hese new conflicts arise in domains of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization; they are carried out in subinstitutional — or at least extraparliamentary — forms of protest; and the underlying deficits reflect a reification of communicatively structured domains of action that will not respond to the media of money and power. The issue is not primarily one of compensations that the welfare state can provide, but of defending and restoring ways of life. (92)

Habermas helps to focus our attention on communication between and among individuals and groups in the lifeworld, where people can come together in the public sphere and reach understanding, where norms and roles are contested and defended, and argumentation can be used to decide legitimacy ("Toward a Reconstruction" 132-133). Habermas's conception of communicative action allows us to understand that people are fundamentally relational beings, using communicative action in their everyday lives to create relationships, norms, and values. This understanding is important for working with students in developing agency, I believe, because we need to focus on how students develop relationships, norms, and values amongst themselves and with others outside of the classroom.

Our understanding of the public sphere can begin with Habermas's conceptions of the lifeworld and communicative action: the public sphere is a "place" for citizens to interact and create mutual understandings; it is not created or promoted by the state or market. Habermas's contribution to an understanding of the public sphere began with *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which he discusses the emergence of the concept of public spheres during the rise of bourgeois society in eighteenth century Europe. His work has been largely revised by such feminist critical theorists as Iris Marion Young and Nancy Fraser, and it is upon the work of these two critics that I would like to focus.

It is important to keep in mind, however, as we explore criticisms of Habermas's work, that Habermas was describing the ideal public sphere as it was performed by bourgeois eighteenth century Europe. Habermas acknowledges that it was the fictitious belief of property owners that they were "common human beings" that allowed them to accept "the fiction of the *one* public" (*Structural Transformation* 56, emphasis original). Habermas also admits there were limitations to who could engage in the public sphere: women were legally excluded and those who did not own property were excluded *de facto* (55-56). The public of eighteenth century Europe "in its deliberations ... anticipated in principle that all human beings belong to it" but *de facto* limited the deliberating public to those with property and education (85). Habermas is quite explicit that his work in *The Structural Transformation* is to understand “the structure and function of the *liberal* model of the bourgeois public sphere, to its emergence and transformation.” The bourgeois public sphere, Habermas writes, marginalized and suppressed the plebeian public sphere (xviii). Habermas also stressed that the public sphere he describes is situated in an historical context and that it cannot “be transferred, idealtypically generalized” to other historical contexts (xvii), though I believe that, beginning with Habermas’s seminal work, we can gain an understanding of what an ideal public sphere may look like — not because the ideal is possible, but because I believe it is a goal worth striving toward.

Bruce Robbins, writing in the tradition of Habermas, asks bluntly whether an inclusive public sphere has ever existed, and, quoting Stanley Aronowitz, believes that most historical efforts to find this ideal public really “uncover ... a ‘mythic town square in the sky’ for which hard evidence is not proposed, nor even sought” (“Introduction” viii). The public sphere for Robbins is ghostly, a “phantom” (ix), but the work of Habermas, with the criticisms brought forth by feminists and critical scholars such as Young and Fraser, offers us a chance to better understand an ideal public sphere, which, I believe, can help us look for potentials and dangers in actual public spaces. Understanding that the public sphere is actually multifaceted with many possible publics, that it can and should be open to multiple discourses that are not solely logically driven, that people cannot and should not have to bracket off their status when engaged in public discourse, that that private interests and issues are also important in public debate and should be explored (because they may very well be public interests), that the goal of dialogue is not always consensus, and that discourse does not have to be face to face can help us seek answers, I believe, to what Jacques Derrida calls an "impossible but necessary" question: "How then to open the avenue of great debates, accessible to the majority, while yet enriching the multiplicity and the quality of public discourses, of evaluating agencies, of 'scenes' or places of visibility?" (qtd. in Robbins xii).

Fraser and Young both offer criticisms of Habermas's work that can be of value in understanding the public sphere, the blogosphere as a public sphere, and student writing. In "Rethinking the Public Sphere," Fraser offers a criticism of Habermas's conception of the bourgeois public sphere. Drawing from the work of historians Joan Landes, Mary Ryan, and Geoff Eley, Fraser concludes that Habermas's work actually *idealizes* the liberal public sphere of the eighteenth and nineteenth century because he does not address the way that some issues are labeled "private" and therefore excluded from the public sphere, how other public spheres and counterpublics existed concurrently with the liberal bourgeois public sphere, and how certain voices were excluded (Fraser 4-9). Fraser fully understands that Habermas was not being prescriptive of the public sphere, but criticizes his work:

> Oddly, Habermas stops short of developing a new, postbourgeois model of the public sphere. Moreover, he never explicitly problematizes some dubious assumption that underlie the bourgeois model. As a result, we are left at the end of the *Structural Transformation* without a conception of the public sphere that is sufficiently distinct from the bourgeois conception to serve the needs of critical theory today. (3)

While Fraser problematizes Habermas's concept of the public sphere and concludes that "We can no longer assume that the bourgeois conception of the public sphere was simply an unrealized utopian ideal; it was also a masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate an emergent form of class rule" (8), she does not endorse rejecting his theory, but instead wishes to call into question assumptions of his theory, three of which are critical to my work here:

1. the assumption that it is possible for interlocuters in a public sphere to bracket status differentials and to deliberate "as if" they were social equals; the assumption, therefore, that societal equality is not a necessary condition for political democracy;
2. the assumption that the proliferation of a multiplicity of competing publics is necessarily a step away from, rather than toward, greater democracy, and that a single, comprehensive public sphere is always preferable to a nexus of multiple publics;
3. the assumption that discourse in public spheres should be restricted to deliberation about the common good, and that the appearance of "private interests" and "private issues" is always undesirable (9)

In addition to Fraser, Young has offered critiques of Habermas's conception of the public sphere and of deliberative democracy theories that arise from his work. In *Inclusion and Democracy*, Young calls into question a few more assumptions Habermas and others make, which I will summarize here (and enumerate for further explanation below):

4. the assumption that democratic deliberation will only work when it is constrained by norms of discourse;
5. the assumption that dialogue must be face-to-face in order to really be democratic;
6. the assumption that the goal of dialogue should be consensus. (36-51)

I would like to explore briefly these six criticisms of Habermas's theory of the public sphere in more detail.

1. Fraser and others have stressed that women were excluded from the bourgeois public sphere, as were other groups; the bourgeois notion of the public sphere "rests on a class- and gender-based notion of publicity, one that accepts at face value the bourgeois

public's claim to be *the* public" (7). (By *publicity*, a term commonly used to mean notoriety or connote promotional material, Fraser means exposure in public; I follow Fraser in my use of the term *publicity* in this thesis.) Habermas proposes that in the public sphere, people can bracket their differences and, thus, their arguments will be accepted for their quality and not because of who makes the argument. However, Fraser notes that subaltern groups tend to develop styles of communication that are not culturally valued by those with more power, and that the public sphere tends to be dominated by styles equated with those in power (10-11). Habermas's notion of the public sphere makes the assumption that dialogue will work when groups have different social statuses, but this liberalism presupposes that issues of economic disparity, families, and everyday life are separate from political issues, and thus, social inequality remains unquestioned. "*Pace* liberalism, then," Fraser writes, "political democracy requires substantive social equality" (12).

2. The next critique of Habermas's work is that his conception of the public sphere is limited to a single site of publicity. Instead, we should view the possibility of "the actual multiplicity of distinct and overlapping public discourses, public spheres, and scenes of evaluation that already exist" but are not seen to exist or valued in a conception of a single public sphere (Robbins xii). Because social groups have unequal access to and parity in deliberation, then it is necessary to imagine alternative public spheres where subaltern groups can deliberate. Indeed, revisionist history has shown that there were alternative public spheres, what Fraser calls *subaltern counterpublics*, of women, of workers, and of peoples of color, during the time of the bourgeois liberal public sphere. These counterpublics are not separatist, but are instead *publicist*: while the group might

be involuntarily forced into enclave, the goal of these counterpublics is to extend their ideas and discourse into other areas of public life. Fraser believes counterpublics have two purposes: “On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics” (15).

3. Habermas’s conception of the public sphere also proposes that there is a “common good” to be defined, and that “private issues” that are not related to the common good are not to be discussed. However, this is problematic in that it has a simplified dichotomy of public v. private. Fraser notes four dichotomous definitions of public, in which there is a contrasted private: “(1) state-related; (2) accessible to everyone; (3) of concern to everyone; and (4) pertaining to a common good or shared interest.” However, these dichotomies of public v. private leave out two senses of private that do not have a corresponding public: “(5) pertaining to private property in a market economy; and (6) pertaining to intimate domestic or personal life, including sexual life” (19). It is problematic to exclude these two senses of private from public discourse and from the “common good” because they are wrapped up in social inequality and injustice. Domestic abuse, for example, was (and unfortunately still often is) considered a private concern because it was in the realm of the family, but because of counterpublic works of feminists, this “private” issue was brought into the public sphere and became a concern of the public. When the majority believes an issue like domestic abuse is private, it is excluded from the “common good.” Fraser’s previous point, that the public sphere needs to be opened up to multiple publics to allow inclusive participation, does no good on its

own without also stressing that issues relegated to “private” might also be deliberated in public (19-22).

4-6. As I have already discussed, Habermas’s focus on the “better argument” is problematic in that people in the lifeworld are differently educated and differently acculturated. While Habermas advocated “norms” of argumentation and discussion, these “norms” would most likely be defined by the group that already has the most institutional power: educated white men. Those who might discuss and share their experiences in different ways (and perhaps less argumentative claims and support style ways, such as narrative, or emotion-laden claims of experience) will not be fully included in the deliberation that occurs in a Habermasian public sphere.

Iris Marion Young, in *Inclusion and Democracy*, takes up the Habermasian project by ammending his work to be more inclusive. Young endorses deliberative democracy because of its emphasis on inclusion, political equality, reasonableness, and publicity, concluding that, in regards to inclusion and social justice, it is the best way to think about democracy (21-26). However, Young critiques deliberative democracy because it privileges argument and unity, assumes face-to-face discourse, and assumes norms of order that can be harmful. As I have mentioned, the deliberation typically privileges groups in power who have defined what makes a good argument. Young notes that this privilege also goes to those who are more highly educated because speech is often considered “articulate” when it is organized like “well-formed written speech”: “Speech or writing framed as straightforward assertion is privileged over more circuitous, hesitant, or questioning expression” (38). Because Young sees problems in the way argument is valued in deliberation, she prefers the term *communicative democracy* (40).

Young also sees problems with Habermas's goal of unity through deliberation: because of social inequality, unity can be used in order to exclude those with less power; agreement can too narrowly define the agenda of the group; and those afraid that an issue might be too contentious to reach agreement might not even bring that issue to the discussion (43-44). Young promotes a "'decentered' concept of politics and society" which rejects the dominant view of deliberative democracy as having "one big meeting at the conclusion of which decisions are made" (46). Thus, because dialogue can be decentered, it does not necessarily have to be face-to-face. Young also rejects the idea of a "norm of order," which isn't something Habermas promoted, but is rather an implicit theme of many models of deliberative democracy. Instead of promoting a "norm of order" which could exclude others because they might be too "extreme" or "emotional," Young promotes reasonableness and valuing disorderliness, which can call attention to the unreasonableness of others (47-49).

These themes, as outlined by Fraser and Young, are ones to which I will return, both in this chapter and later in my thesis, as I explore the blogosphere as a public sphere and public writing in the composition classroom.

How can the Internet be a Public of Publics?

In her 1999 article "How Democratic Can We Get?: The Internet, the Public Sphere, and Public Discourse," Irene Ward draws on the work of Habermas to determine if the Internet might be an emerging public sphere. She concludes that, in 1999,

> [T]he Internet seems to be able to offer us something more like the liberal-individualist model of democracy, where polls and surveys might be easily conducted, where 'hits' on sites can be counted as an indication of interest,

> and where common gateway interface (cgi) scripts now allow World Wide Web page authors to gather information from people that access web pages. (376)

Her argument, though, is situated in a pre-Web 2.0 era, before the proliferation of instantaneous publication, such as blog posting. For example, she notes that very few people could publish on the web if they did not have the financial and personal resources to devote to it. While this is still somewhat true, it is no longer true that someone couldn't publish online or send or receive email in 20-minute public library session, as was the restriction Ward describes in 1999 (374). I would agree that the possibilities for the Internet as a public sphere were greatly restricted in 1999. However, a mere eight years later there is more potential for public discourse, though admittedly certain issues such as access still greatly limit this potential, especially in developing countries. And, as I outlined Ó Baoill's argument in Chapter 1, there are still many limitations to the blogosphere as a public sphere.

Philosopher James Bohman's contribution to the collection *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, titled "Expanding dialogue: The Internet, the Public Sphere and Prospects for Transnational Democracy," can help us understand whether the Internet can serve as a public sphere. He posits two requirements for social acts to be considered public:

> [T]hey are not only directed to an indefinite audience but also offered with some expectation of a response, especially with regard to interpretability and justifiability... [and they] constitute a common and open 'space' for interaction with indefinite others. (135)

By an indefinite audience, Bohman means that there is the potential that anyone can read or hear the work; that is, while there may be a specific audience in mind, there is also the possibility of other interlocutors. According to Bohman, the potential public sphere of the Internet is that it can be a "public of publics," not a single, heterogeneous public sphere (152). Bohman determines that, just like writing, the Internet has both progressive potential and repressive potential dependent upon how it is used in transforming the public sphere (140). In order to facilitate a democratic public sphere, communication on the internet needs to include both metadiscourse — that is, discourse about the way users are communicating — and mutual accountability, wherein the boundaries between speaker and audience are blurred and speakers are accountable to listeners, who respond when they find content objectionable (136). The Internet can only be a democratic public sphere if agents engage within it with reflexivity and democratic communication (140).

For Habermas, the public sphere exists between the private lives of citizens and the public authorities. Bloggers and academics Torill Mortensen and Jill Walker, in "Blogging Thoughts: Personal Publication as an Online Research Tool," write that "Blogs exist right on this border between what's private and what's public" (256), containing a tension between the two spheres similar to that of the salons that Habermas describes. Mortensen and Walker note that because our public has been colonized by politicians and celebrities (Habermas calls this "re-feudalisation"), we do not participate in the public arena, but instead "acclaim the antics of the real actors" (257). They continue, "In this public of acclamation and performance, the real tension between the private and public is gone: the private no longer has any real potential of influence, it has been made part of the public show" (257). Blogs, however, offer a chance to reclaim the public sphere, just as salons offered eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeois men an opportunity to engage with each other. Blogs are a way of connecting individuals to the public sphere. Certainly a blogger "can seduce, attack, manipulate, rant or expose herself — but most of the time what you find in weblogs is an attempt to say something about what concerns the writer" (258).

Metaphors of the Blogosphere

Clearly, according to Bohman and Mortensen and Walker, the Internet has strong potential to be a public sphere — and I would concur. What about the use of blogs offers the potential for liberation and democratic communication in this public sphere? And, more specifically, how could blogs be used in a classroom as a site of potentially increased, inclusive, democratic deliberation? To begin to answer this question, we must consider the metaphors we use for the blogosphere. As I will show in the following interchapter, the way we conceive of the blogosphere affects how we move through it and interact with others within it. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson show in *Metaphors We Live By*, the metaphors we use for concepts affect not only how we talk about them, but also our thoughts and actions, "govern[ing] our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details" (3). The metaphors we use for the blogosphere are important in terms of architecture, affecting the ways we move (in itself a metaphor), pay attention, and discuss. Many metaphors are in vogue: especially that of the blogosphere as filter, as museum, as contact zone, and as a collection of communities. I would like to overview each of these metaphors briefly, show how they hinder the potential of using blogs in communicative democracy and in the classroom, and then propose a different metaphor for the public spheres of blogs: that of the city.

An example of someone who describes the blogosphere as a museum is blogger John Dibbel, who compares it to a *Wunderkammer*, an early museum. Translated as "cabinet of wonders," the *Wunderkammer* was a "random collection of strange, compelling objects typically compiled and owned by a learned, well-off gentleman" (73). Because there is so much data and information out there (both in the physical world and in the digital world), Dibbel argues that museums are necessary and that "the weblog reflects our own attempts to assimilate the glut of immaterial data loosed upon us by the 'discovery' of the networked world" (73). Eventually, the Internet will be a more structured museum, rather than the unstructured *Wunderkammer*. However, this metaphor is problematic because it treats Web content as artifacts that are to be consumed, perhaps with commentary from a blogger, but without much of a reaction or dialogue from the reader. The blogger becomes, then, a curator, and the blog's content a collection of artifacts that are not active in the world. This metaphor presupposes that Internet users are merely consumers and are not producers of knowledge or discourse.

A similar metaphor for the blogosphere is that of filter. Blogger Rebecca Blood discusses the way various blogs act as filters. Similarly to museums, the blog as filter is written by a blogger who goes out on the Internet and finds hard to find information or stories, or collects material and information around certain themes (Blood). A blogger may, for instance, be interested in the current political climate of Darfur region of Sudan and collect news articles, pictures, and video related to Darfur. Readers who have discovered this blog might read some posts or skim it, realize it is written by someone who agrees or shares affinity with them, and then continue to read this blog, checking on it every few days or having their RSS reader pull in its RSS feed. These weblogs are also advantageous for readers because they tend to find information and websites that are hard to find on the Internet and that the mass media do not report (Blood). Clancy Ratliff notes that web readers can go to the blog of someone whose opinion they value, someone who has developed a positive ethos with her readership, and find information instead of using search engines that match search terms with website text ("Sites of Resistance" 5). While this metaphor of blog as filter is better than the metaphor of museum with regard to communicative democracy, because it opens up the blogosphere for associative groups and a "public of publics," it does not fully allow for reciprocal dialogue. Instead, it is still a consumption-based model, in which readers go to an authority to get information. While this metaphor doesn't close down dialogue, it doesn't assume dialogue as part of the blogosphere experience. It is true that the filter genre is one of the genealogical ancestors of the blog — as is evident by the word *log* in *weblog* (Miller and Shepherd) — but, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, blogs remediate genres other than filters.

The next metaphor I would like to discuss comes from a writing instructor. In "Supporting Deliberative Democracy: Pedagogical Arts of the Contact Zone of the Electronic Sphere," Philip J. Burns describes the Internet as a contact zone. The concept of the contact zone was developed by Mary Louise Pratt in 1991 as a way to understand the site where two cultures meet and the literate arts that are created there. In order to explore the potential for literate and pedagogical arts, Pratt is interested in the possibility of dead letters, or unread artifacts, written by the politically weaker culture and unread or misunderstood and dismissed by the politically stronger culture. She defines contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 530). As Burns notes, there are advantages to viewing the Internet as a site of contact zones: the public sphere is viewed as "pluralistic, asymmetrical, and complex"; the Internet becomes open to more than just persuasive rhetoric, but also informative, inquisitive, and accommodative rhetoric; safe houses, or political enclaves for subaltern groups, can be formed (138); Internet agents, if aware or taught so, can understand that they are "decentered subjects" and that neutral positions do not exist (140).

I admire this contact zone model quite a bit, and it some respects it works quite well. The blogosphere as contact zone also seems to meet Bohman's criteria of the Internet as public sphere: it has the potential for an indefinite audience, for response from others, and for an open space. However, as a pedagogical concept, it has some limitations. Jan Cooper, in her essay "Queering the Contact Zone," problematizes the idea of a classroom as a contact zone, because it turns individuals (students) into nation-states, romanticizing students in the eyes of the teacher (26). Cooper also argues that identities are more fluid or gaseous than solid, whereas the metaphor of *contact* assumes a solidity of identity that may be misleading (27). It is important to explore the fluidity of identity, especially around gender, race, nationality, and sexuality. However, as Cooper does, I still find some aspects of this metaphor apt and helpful, such as the understanding that the classroom is not a homogeneous community, but is instead very heterogeneous. Moreover, Pratt's ideas of the arts in the contact zone and pedagogical arts are still very helpful in understanding both student and professional writing (Cooper 34-36). Joseph Harris too has criticized the contact zone metaphor, worried that, in the pedagogical model, students are "not so much brought into conflict with opposing views as placed in a kind of harmless connection with a series of exotic others" (119). In the words of Christian Weisser, viewing the classroom as urban space rather than as a contact zone or community, "allows us to imagine it as a site where people negotiate across differences rather than through them" (Weisser 52). Working across differences, rather than through them, means allowing those differences to continue and be emphasized rather than trying to resolve them in the name of consensus.

The last metaphor of the blogosphere I would like to discuss before moving on to a discussion of Iris Marion Young's concept of the ideal city is *the blogosphere as a collection of communities*. In "Blogs as Virtual Communities: Identifying a Sense of Community in the Julie/Julia Project," Anita Blanchard discusses whether blogs can be virtual communities. She concludes that a single blog can be a virtual community because there is a stable population of people (a core group who regularly read and comment and may be supplemented by other, less consistent or occasional readers) and a sense of community among many of the readers. Blanchard also discusses the possibilities for virtual communities within groups of blogs:

> Interactive blogrolls connecting blogs with highly active comments' sections may create communities of blogs who share an audience. If this interlinking of blogs develops around particular topics, it is possible that a sense of community may develop and be shared between these interactive blogs. This will decrease the dependence of the virtual community on any one blog author and increase the chances of viability for the virtual blog community as a whole (Blanchard).

The drive for looking for community in the blogosphere is a strong one; for example, the editors of *Into the Blogosphere* subtitled their online book *Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs*, and many of the articles in the collection discuss community as part of the blog culture (Gurak et al.). While it is admirable to look for community within network of blogs, it is also problematic when looking for full democratic engagement in the public sphere.

In *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* Iris Marion Young offers a critique of the drive for community that comes from those who offer it as the dichotomous alternative to individualism. Young's critique focuses on the utopian call for small, autonomous communities "in real life," but it can be applied to the metaphor *blogosphere as a collection of communities* as well. Young notes that the drive for community comes from a desire for unity and shared subjectivity, what Foucault calls the Rousseauist dream of

> a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parents, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, zones established by the privileges of royal power or the prerogative of some corporation, zones of disorder. It was the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men's [*sic*] hearts should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles, and that the opinion of all reign over each. (Foucault, qtd in Young 229)

The call for community is a call for a shared consciousness or subjectivity that could give rise to this hoped-for transparency among citizens. Young believes that "the ideal of community denies, devalues, or represses the ontological difference of subjects, and seeks to dissolve social inexhaustibility into the comfort of a self-enclosed whole" (230). A hope for such transparency denies the otherness of others, and thus in the ideal community, citizens must lose their subjectivity for the sake of transparency: "each understands the others and recognizes the others in the same way the understand themselves, and all recognize that others understand them as they understand themselves" (231). The subject never has to understand someone who is different from her. This, however, is impossible, as Young notes, because subjects are heterogeneous and never fully understand their own desires and selves, so it is impossible to be transparent (232).

Additionally, according to Young, the ideal of a community evokes a place where everyone has common ideals, a common heritage, a common self-identification, and a common culture (*Justice* 234). This can lead to community being a site of exclusion. Also, theories of community often lack a way for communities to be in dialogue with each other. Joseph Harris adds to this critique; he notes that by using community as a metaphor, we replace physical proximity with likemindedness: “an affinity of beliefs and purposes, consensus, is left to hold such communities together” (102). Drawing from the work of Raymond Williams, who critiques the term *community* as “warmly persuasive” (Williams, qtd. in Harris 99, 102), Harris argues that, for academic discourse, we should eschew ideas of a cohesive community and instead view academic discourse as more akin to a city, “viewing it as a polyglot, as a sort of space in which competing beliefs and practices intersect with and confront one another” (106). *Community*, Harris urges, should be a term for “specific and local groups” (107).

If we look again at the concept of a community of blogs, we can see this at play. For example, LiveJournal, a social networking blog software system, is a collection of individual bloggers and community pages where individuals write and think in dialogue based on various affinities, such as location, educational aspirations, or identities. As a member of certain LiveJournal communities, and without revealing the content of such communities (which are often locked to those who are not members of the community), I can attest that some members have been driven from communities based on different communication styles and different views of the world. Additionally, the communities on

LiveJournal have no way or need to be in concert with other LiveJournal communities. We could also look at the larger blogosphere and see communities of liberal Democratic bloggers and conservative Religious Right bloggers. When members of these communities "travel" to the other community, it is not necessarily to reach understanding or to engage in quality dialogue, but rather to affirm their own identities (and thus their community's) by gawking at the "other." Thus, communities of bloggers can even use other communities to define themselves in contrast to each other and not to reach understanding.

While I have critiqued each of these metaphors (museum, filter, contact zone, and community) as inadequate to describe the blogsophere as a whole, I think they are perfectly well suited to describe certain blogs or certain communities of blogs. For instance, the popular *Boing Boing: A Directory of Wonderful Things* (boingboing.net) is a blog that acts as a filter or museum, collecting links and excerpts from a variety of interesting and unusual things on the Internet (Frauenfelder et al.); the blogging system LiveJournal hosts communities on a variety of topics, some of which are even closed to outside readers; the queer blog *Box Turtle Bulletin* (www.boxturtlebulletin.com) includes parody of the pseudo-science of Religious Right public intellectuals, auto-ethnography, and outright denunciation of some religious figures — examples of what Pratt calls "literate arts of the contact zone" (Burroway; Pratt 536).

As I will discuss below, the metaphor I would like to use for the blogosphere is that of the ideal city, as outlined by Iris Marion Young. In the ideal city, there are various different public spheres and a multitude of ways to engage in the "public of publics." Thus, individual blogs can take various forms in the public sphere, as long as they meet the requirements as described by Bohman: an indefinite audience with the expectation of a response, an open public, and a discourse about the ways in which participants communicate. As Miller and Shepherd discuss, the genre of the blog has many ancestral genres that are rooted in engagement in the public sphere. Drawing on the work of Kathleen Hall Jamieson, they show that, just as we cannot understand the State of the Union speech without understanding its ancestry in the King's address to the Parliament, we cannot fully understand the blog without understanding its different genealogical ancestors. Most of these genres were ways to be engaged in the public sphere: filters, museums, and political journalism such as pamphlets, editorials, and opinion columns (Miller and Shepherd). (The genealogical ancestors of blogs is a topic I take up in more detail in Chapter 3.) Just as there are various ways of communicating in the pre-digital public sphere, there are as well in the blogosphere.

The Blogosphere as an Ideal City

In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Iris Marion Young proposes that instead of the community, we view the ideal city as the normative ideal for the public sphere. The "city life" is defined by Young "as the being together of strangers" (*Justice* 237). In a city, people interact with each other but do not have to give into commonness or dissolve into unity. Rather, people can belong to affinity groups (such as families, social networks, neighborhoods) and still interact with people who are different form them (237). The ideal city, Young stresses, is not a real city, but rather a normative ideal that we can look toward as a model.

She explains the four virtues of the ideal city, the first of which is "[s]ocial differentiation without exclusion": in the ideal city, it is possible for difference to flourish, and for deviant and minority groups to develop critical mass and have some anonymity that is not available in a smaller town (238). Borders between neighborhoods and people "are open and undecidable" (239). The second virtue of the ideal city is variety: there is a variety of different public places, including restaurants, streets, churches, parks, clubs, offices, bars. The third virtue Young espouses is *eroticism*, that is, "the wide sense of an attraction to the other, the pleasure and excitement of being drawn out of one's secure routine to encounter the novel, strange, and surprising" (239). This is the obverse of a community, where one's identity is constantly affirmed by the sameness around oneself. Instead, in the ideal city, one is confronted with difference and "takes pleasure in being drawn out of oneself to understand that there are other meanings, practices, perspectives on the city, and that one could learn or experience something more and different by interacting with them" (240). Young's fourth virtue of the ideal city is publicity — the idea that public spaces are open to everyone, where one must acknowledge the differences of others but does not have to assimilate those differences (241).

I propose that we view the blogosphere as an ideal city, rather than as a museum, series of filters, contact zone, or collection of communities. Indeed, using blogs in the classroom can allow a way for the classroom to engage the public sphere, which is a goal of many writing instructors (Friend 672). A writing class that engages the blogosphere using the metaphor of *the blogosphere as an ideal city* allows for a potential place for students to engage as agents in the public sphere. Critical theorist James Bohman proposes that the Internet has potential as a public sphere because it acts as a "public of publics" and can have an indefinite audience, but we must also engage in metadiscourse, that is, discourse about the way users are communicating; and mutual accountability, wherein the boundaries between speaker and audience are blurred and speakers are accountable to listeners, who respond when they find content objectionable (136).

In "From the Contact Zone to the City: Iris Marion Young and Composition Theory," Christy Friend uses Young's model of the city to help understand the classroom. This model of the public sphere is useful to teachers because Young proposes that policymakers must create public forums where it is safe for a heterogeneous public to discuss issues. Friend quotes Young:

> Justice requires that each person [and each group] should have the institutionalized means to participate effectively in the decisions that affect her or his actions.... Agents who are empowered with a voice to discuss ends and means of collective life and who have institutionalized means of participating in those debates... open together onto a set of publics where none has autonomy [to ignore the concerns of other groups, but all are empowered to speak]. (Young, qtd. in Friend 661, bracketed material and ellipses are Friend's)

Friend notes that, while the contact zone theory of the public sphere has benefits, the model of the city for the classroom foregrounds discussion and participation in democratic processes (661). Understanding the classroom informed by Young's model of the city would allow us, according to Friend, to develop pedagogical activities that are inclusive of various viewpoints and groups during dialogue, understand that deliberation can take many different shapes, value both consensus and conflict, and support those perspectives that have been disenfranchised (673).

While Friend's work is related to the classroom, I would like extrapolate from her work to speculate on the potential public spheres of the blogosphere. Friend finds limitations in the contact zone model of the classroom and public sphere. When applied to the classroom, the model tends to promote critical analysis of historically distant events rather than students' own responses to issues. While Friend acknowledges there is nothing wrong with critical analysis, the curriculum used with the contact zone model tends to "not directly engage students in shaping the outcome of any particular debate, nor do they connect in an explicit way to contemporary public conflicts" (666). Friend believes that those who use the contact zone model of the classroom (and its engagement in the public sphere) do not take an approach that has the students engage in the public sphere. Instead, students know the topography of the public sphere, through analysis, but might not know how to traverse it. Indeed the problem is the same for teachers. The contact zone works well for a topographic model of the public sphere, but fails to help teachers traverse it when conflict arises in the classroom (667).

A writing class that engages in the blogosphere using the metaphor of *the blogosphere as an ideal city* allows for a place for students to engage as agents in the public sphere. Using blogs as a way to have the writing class engage in the public sphere has the potential to allow students to engage in democratic communication. We can use technology in a way to discuss local, national, and transnational issues of social justice, and to engage in conversations surrounding those topics that are being held in the public sphere already. As Young describes social justice, it is about ending domination and oppression and about fostering self-determination and self-development. Discussions held in the public sphere, mediated through blogs, may be a way for the writing classroom to cease being insular and instead import itself into the public.

As I have discussed the metaphors of the blogosphere, I have really been talking about architecture, about the ways we visualize the internet and the ways our bodies move metaphorically through the Internet. As Young notes, spatial metaphors are important in describing the public sphere:

> [I]t helps distinguish public discourse and expression not as content or import but as differently situated. The spatial metaphor also helps describe public discussion as a process which people enter and leave, but that it goes on even when some leave. (*Inclusion* 171).

When the blogosphere is viewed as a city, as a way for students in a classroom enter the public sphere, we can understand that the conversations in the public sphere are continuing and that students can enter and exit the "city" when appropriate. Students can engage in the public sphere as agents, described by Young as meaning "that you can take the constraints and possibilities that condition your life and make something of them in your own way" (101). The blogosphere could be used in a writing classroom so that students can be agents in the public sphere, engaged in self-development and self-determined communicative action.

While the model that Young proposes is that of an ideal, not a real, city, her work is still useful in considering the ways in which we traverse the public sphere, and in considering ways in which we can foster a stronger public sphere. While a public sphere can never live up to its ideal, Young's model of the ideal city does provide a model for something to work toward.

Conclusion

As I have tried to caution, we cannot merely assume that new technologies will be liberatory or revolutionary. They must be viewed in particular settings based on particular uses. If we value Habermas's concern that the lifeworld is being colonized by the forces of the market and state, then it is important to be cautious of a potential publics being colonized by the state and market: by the infusion of advertisements that contradict a blogger's ethics (as is the example of Oregon State blogger Eric Stoller, who used Google Ads only to discover that they advertised sports mascots on the very same blog posts that he wrote *against* racism in sports mascots; see Stoller), by state-imposed sanctions and restrictions, such as the 2006 bill proposed by John McCain that would fine a blogger for not deleting comments that are considered inappropriate (Terkel), and by corporations who have begun to use blog software for propoganda machines, just as Habermas noted that the nineteenth century public sphere of periodicals was replaced by the market-driven homogeneous media (*Transformation* 181-195). In "The Lo(n)g Revolution: The Blogosphere as an Alternative Public Sphere?", British media studies scholar Anna Notaro raises the vital question:

> Today, however, Internet has come to be established as a delimited public arena, and the question is if the cyberspace imaginary will become a highly monitored and regionalized social space or if the Internet will retain its potential for independent endeavors and ideological exchange. (par. 1)

There is often a utopian attitude toward blogs, that they will revolutionize the way we do something, whether it be academic writing, the collection of knowledge, or journalism. In "The Spirit of Paulo Freire in Blogland: Struggling for a Knowledge-Log

Revolution," Christine Boese previews the potentiality of blogs for revolutionizing how culture disseminates knowledge, even in the corporate workplace:

> While weblogs and knowledge-logs can appear as efficient groupware tools for organizations, klog [knowledge blog] interface features seem to allow political openings to change corporate cultures in ways most groupware never intended, through a goal of a dialogic, critical pedagogy of workers helping and teaching other workers outside the realm of "official policy." Given the unvarnished nature of such in-house knowledge making, institutional controls on worker's [*sic*] minds and voices can be undermined, creating a tension between officially sanctioned controls and policies and contingent and disciplinary knowledge or professional expertise (Friedson, 1986; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Geisler, 1994). Personal blog sites of journalists in the employ of large, knowledge-commodity organizations such as Time Warner release this same tension into public spaces and reveal the very real disruption on a large scale that klogs can create on a small scale. (Boese)

Boese sees blogs as subversive because they are at the intersection of so many border regions: between the personal and public, between boundaries, and between populism and elitism. To Boese, blogs are "spontaneous and dialogic workshops" that can be used to subvert mainstream media and centralized knowledge-making, leading to a Freirian pedagogy.

Of course, when I evoke the ideal city in the metaphor *blogosphere as an ideal city*, I do not mean to simplify reality; simply viewing the blogosphere as a city does not remove us from our material reality. As compositionist Nedra Reynolds has pointed out, the ways we talk about the classroom (as a city, for instance), often ignores the material reality of the classroom and of the city. No one visits the ghetto of a city, she notes, and tourists are often guided through a city to certain attractive sites by the tourism industry (26). Too, we must be cognizant of issues of access (who has access and time to discuss on the Internet?); the material reality of hardware manufacturing and sales (how much, for example, does our ability to hold public discourse on the Internet rest on the domination of third world peoples who build computers in factories?); and the colonization of the Internet by the market and state (now that businesses such as Walmart are hiring writers to appear as independent bloggers that advocate their products, what does this mean for our ability to discuss freely with other individuals?). And, as Notaro states, “The blogosphere cannot live up to Habermas's ideal model, for the simple reason that his model is exactly that, an *ideal* one” (par. 11, emphasis original). Indeed, the blogosphere cannot live up to Young’s ideal city, because it, too, is an ideal.

Just as the metaphor of *the blogosophere as an ideal city* raises questions about access, manufacturing, and colonization, it also raises questions about the composition classroom. If we value the variety of publics and discourses found in a city and on the Internet, what type of discourse do we value in a composition classroom? For instance, in a city we find various forms of publics and discourses, such as magazines, graffiti, speeches, town hall forums, coffee house dialogue, poetry slams, rap and drum circles on the streets, etc. On blogs, in addition to written discourse we find podcasts, youtube videos, images, and graphics. This multifaceted array of discourse raises questions about the norms of discourse and what type of discourse is valued in democratic public spheres; as my discussion of critical theory and the public sphere earlier shows, Young promotes a *communicative democracy*, as opposed to a *deliberative* one, in order to value a variety of discourse styles (*Inclusion* 38-40). To return to the works of Young and Fraser, we might wonder when students will desire to write online to more mainstream publics or to engage in counterpublic discourse. Additionally, as Fraser notes, private issues are often of public concern, and we should necessarily wonder about the tensions between private and public in online discourse, not only to promote lively writing about issues that are important to students, but also to help students develop a type of agency online that protects their privacy. Young's contribution to our understanding of public discourse also allows for interaction that is not face-to-face, such as online discourse, but we must also wonder how students' agency online transports to agency in their material existence.[4]

I'd like to close this chapter with a few questions. How much does our changing understanding of public discourse in a digital age affect the public discourse we value in a classroom? How can we utilize the blogosphere as a place for students to be agents in the public sphere? How do we negotiate issues of privacy and publicity online in the composition classroom? When asking students to write online, what types of audiences or publics should we desire they write to, and what audiences or publics will they desire to write to? In order to provoke tolerant discourse online that is respectful and provides potential for understanding and growth, what — to use Jane Jacobs's phrase from the opening of this chapter — "built-in equipment allowing strangers to dwell in peace together" are necessary online? How can an understanding of blogs help us to change the writing classroom so that circulation of knowledge isn't solely inward (toward the classroom), but also outward, as Collin Brooke suggests? These are questions that I will explore in the following chapters.

Interchapter 2
The Rhetoric of Walking in the City: Affect, Remixing, and Eroticism

> [T]he *styles or ways of practicing space* flee the control of city planners. Able and ready to create a composition of places, of full and empty areas that allow or forbid passage, city planners are incapable of imposing the rationality of reinforced concrete on multiple and fluid cultural systems that organize the living space of inner areas (apartments, stairways, and the like) or public domains (streets, squares, etc.) and that innervate them with an infinite number of itineraries. […] The same holds true for ways of living time, reading texts, or seeing images. (Michel de Certeau, *Cultural in the Plural* 133, emphasis original)

The metaphor of *the blogosphere as an ideal city* I described in the last chapter also allows for an understanding of rhetoric, movement, and space. In "Walking in the City," Michel de Certeau offers an understanding of movement in the city that provides an alternative vision of resistance and control to the one offered by Foucault's panopticon. de Certeau writes that the lived experiences of those in the city often contradict the ideological plans of administrators, politicians, and planners:

> The city becomes the dominant theme in political legends, but it is no longer a field of programmed and regulated operations. Beneath the discourses that ideologize the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have readable identity proliferate; without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer. (95)

This resistance to "programmed and regulated operations" is best seen at the level of movement. In his 2007 CCCC talk, Jeff Rice discusses the limitations of Google Maps, which provides a route from point A to point B along what the database considers is the quickest, most direct route. Rice tells the story of his route to work, which is not the same drive that Google Map proposes. This is because movement in the city is not just about efficient routes, but instead about various databases we hold in our heads: the databases of people, places, and associations that drive our movement. Jenny Edbauer, in her talk on the same panel, proposes that we think of places as structured affectively. Places frame affect as structural in two ways: 1) affect as metonymy (places stand in for a scattered body; i.e., neighborhoods orient people in an expansive place; affect simplifies a complex area); and 2) affect as structural legitimization (place meanings are legitimized through affect). The ways in which we move through a city aren't easily programmed by a map, corporation, or city planners. Rather, movement is an affective, rhetorical process that comes with individual agency.

de Certeau writes that walking in a city is analogous to a speech act:

> At the most elementary level, it has a triple "enunciative" function: it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech as an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic "contracts" in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an "allocution," "posits another opposite" the speaker and puts contracts between interlocuters into action). It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enuncation. ("Walking" 97-98, emphasis original)

In what he calls a "rhetoric of walking" (99) de Certeau discusses the selections a walker makes in a city regarding where and how to move: "The user of a city picks out certain fragments of the statement in order to actualize them in secret" (98, qting. Roland Barthes). The path of the walker is more complex than how it appears on a map. Movement in the city is full of unlimited possibilities, ranging "according to the time, the path taken and the walker. [...] They therefore cannot be reduced to their graphic trail" (99).

Cultural anthropologist Nicholas Packwood too has written about the impossibility of reducing places "to their graphic trail" in relation to the blogosphere. His *Into the Blogosphere* essay "Geography of the Blogosphere" was written in response to a map of the Internet printed by Bell Labs in the December 1998 issue of *Wired* magazine. Noting that mapping relies on cartographic metaphors that imply static and geographic relationships, Packwood suggests that instead we use ecological and economic models to understand the Internet in general, but more specifically the blogosphere. Because of the complexity of interconnectedness in the blogosphere, it is difficult to understand it in terms of a map. "The blgsophere," according to Packwood, "can be thought of as a market that is made up not only of links but other forms of relationship and reciprocity." An ecological model allows for an understanding of the "interrelationship of living organisms [...] and environment," as well as processes "in mechanical, chemical, physical, physiological, social, political and economic systems." Due to the social nature of blogs, Packwood relates the blogosphere to the ecological concept of neighborhoods: "[The blogosphere] is made up of neighborhoods of bloggers whose relationships echo the need for establishing trust, mediating systems of exchange and maintaining ongoing channels of communication as are found in offline human communities." Understanding the blogosphere as a city, as an ecological space of neighborhoods, allows for the unlimited movement that resists planning that de Certeau discusses.

Just as Edbauer proposes, de Certeau too believes that place names are used as structural legitimization. de Certeau writes that proper place names are like "stars directing itineraries." They are much more than mere "ideas": "They seem to be carried as emblems by the travellers they direct and simultaneously decorate" ("Walking" 104).

Spaces are indeterminate; they have "the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. They insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement" (105). Places have affective connotations, bringing to mind "pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body" (108). The term *blogosphere* in itself is a place name meant to evoke affective associations: a history going back to the late 1990s, which one may or may not be a part of; a network of movement through links that in the past may have evoked joy or anger, apathy or energy; a *sphere* that connotes a place within the Internet that is somehow separate, a *sphere* to itself, but one that is easily traversable into and out of; perhaps even a place set off by a bubble that gives the illusion of being separate from our material reality, where one can repeatedly claim (though fallaciously) that it is the great democratizer, that our social status in material reality does not translate into a certain social status on the Internet.

When considering the blogosphere as a city, keeping in mind this rhetoric of walking and the affect that movement and place connotes is important. It becomes a matter of who structures the blogosphere, of considering which links are clicked and which are not, of who profits and who suffers, of who develops organizational and rhetorical agency in the public sphere. In his CCCC talk, Michigan State graduate student Matt Penniman discusses the value of remixing and cities, drawing upon the work of Richard Florida's *Cities and the Creative Class*. He mostly focuses on planning by city governments that were trying to renew cities, particularly ones in Michigan. Citing the example of Detroit, which tried to remix another city's public transportation model, he notes the way remixing doesn't always work if people don't take into account the ways their own cities functions differently than other cities. What Penniman hits on the mark — the value of remixing, selecting, and repositioning — he mars with an emphasis on a top-down approach: a city for him is created by planners. Instead, when considering the city or the blogosphere as a public, consideration needs to focus on the movement and rhetorical acts of citizens.

With the rise of Web 2.0 technologies, I often wonder about how I "walk" through the Internet. Certainly our movement isn't controlled completely by others: we select which links to click, when to write on our own websites, when to comment on another, when to carry something with us to a new site (as when we quote or link to another site on our sites), when to ignore something. The traveling I do online doesn't always keep me in the "safe" confines of my "neighborhoods": When traveling even amongst friends' blogs and the community of rhetoric and composition bloggers to which I belong, I often "walk away" to a variety of other sites, including blogs by people with wildly different views of my own, writing or presenting their ideas in wildly different ways. There is an *eroticism* in my movement, a "wide sense of an attraction to the other, the pleasure and excitement of being drawn out of one's secure routine to encounter the novel, strange, and surprising" (Young, *Justice* 239). When reading and writing online, I am confronted more than ever before with difference, more so than when I grew up on a small farm, more so than in the two small university cities I have lived in.

I am not denying that I do not exist in enclaves online as well. These enclaves, though, act as counterpublics, to return to Nancy Fraser's term, and do not constitute solely a withdrawal from a larger public, but also an opportunity to prepare for discourse in the larger public (Fraser 15). In "Publics and Counterpublics," English studies scholar and queer theorist Michael Warner adds to our understanding of counterpublics that they do not necessarily have to be subaltern, but are "scene[s] for developing oppositional interpretations of its members' identities, interests, and needs," marked by idioms relevant to those members and the "address to indefinite strangers" (86). Discourse in counterpublics is different from discourse in the dominant public because there is an assumption "that most people will be unwilling to read a gay magazine or go to a black church" (86). However, sometimes people do. I've read blogs by those who are very different from me ideologically and culturally: conservative Christians, single mothers, women of color, explicitly racist folks, anti-gay activists, etc. And they, too, have read and commented in counterpublic spheres to which I belong. I can't say whether *understanding* is better fostered online than in print, but I feel I can say *access* to different peoples and ways of life is, and perhaps this is a good first step toward "being drawn out of oneself to understand that there are other meanings, practices, perspectives on the city, and that one could learn or experience something more and different by interacting with them" (Young, *Justice* 240).

As I think about the Internet, and the blogosphere more specifically, I wonder about where it is headed — or, more accurately, where citizens and administrators are taking it. How are new and developing software changing our ability to move online? How are our reading and writing habits being affected, and embedded in that, how are our ways of listening, identifying with, marking differences, and other matters of engagement with each other and with media changing?

Chapter 3
What's in a Zine?
The Pedagogical Imports of a Public Ancestry to Blogs

> If you want students to learn to write, students who for years have been learning *not* to write, it is probably a good idea to recreate the circumstances under which others have turned to writing. (Linda Brodkey, *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only* 140)

> I had little to do except walk around the city, sneak into Widener Library, and hang around my friends' apartment. Scattered around their apartment, piled precariously on the coffee table, buried under old pizza boxes, forgotten in the cracks of the sofa, were scruffy, homemade little pamphlets. Little publications filled with rantings of high weirdness and exploding with chaotic design. [...] In zines, everyday oddballs were speaking plainly about themselves and our society with an honest sincerity, a revealing intimacy, and a healthy "fuck you" to sanctioned authority — for no money and no recognition, writing for an audience of like-minded misfits. (Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from the Underground* 1-2)

This is the story that Stephen Duncombe, culture and communications scholar and author of *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*, tells of his walking through Boston on a visit and discovering zines. I find it appropriate that in the same passage Duncombe connects walking through Boston, sneaking into a library, and discovering the world of zines. It seems apt that Duncombe came across zines (short for magazines), often published as alternatives to dominant culture, during the same time that he walked through a city in an manner unplanned by dominant culture (sneaking into a library). But what does this abrupt shift to zines have to do with the questions of blogs and pedagogy that I raised at the end of the last chapter? Research into genres and blogs has largely focused on blogs as remediating print media, such journals and diaries, which are not written for a public audience. Here, I mean to turn to a different genealogical ancestor to blogs — the zine — and from that, seek to begin to answer the questions I posed in the last chapter:

If we value the variety of publics and discourses found in a city and on the Internet, what type of discourse do we value in a composition classroom? How much does our changing understanding of public discourse in a digital age affect the public discourse we value in a classroom? How can we utilize the blogosphere as a place for students to be agents in the public sphere? How do we negotiate issues of privacy and publicity online in the composition classroom? When asking students to write online, what types of audiences or publics should we desire they write to, and what audiences or publics will they desire to write to? How can an understanding of blogs help us to change the writing classroom so that circulation of knowledge isn't solely inward (toward the classroom), but also outward, as Colin Brooke suggests?

I would like to approach these questions through the lens of genre, specifically the question I asked in Chapter 1: *if we understand some blogs as genealogical descendants of other public writing (as opposed to the private writing of journals, diaries, commonplace books, and notebooks, as scholars have most often suggested), what can we learn about blogs? How does this affect writing in the composition classroom?* In this chapter, I overview research and theorizing on blogs as genres before moving into a discussion of the zine as a genealogical ancestor to the blog. I pose six aspects of zines that warrant exploration as ancestors to blogs, with a focus on the newsletter *Fag Rag* published by the Boston Gay Liberation Front in the 1970s, considering the implications of this research for scholarship in rhetoric and composition. I also propose drawing some pedagogical implications and questions that this research suggests. The pedagogical implications I discuss in this chapter are, granted, somewhat conceptual rather than grounded in practice; in Chapter 4, I will ground some of these conclusions in proposals for material practice.

As I showed in Chapter 1, the study of blogs through the lens of genre is nascent. Carolyn Miller and Dawn Shepherd's article "Blogging as Social Action: A Genre Analysis of the Weblog" explores the genealogical ancestry of blogs through the genre of the diary or journal, and the focus of their essay is on diaristic blogs, blogs they feel show "some widely shared, recurrent need for cultivation and validation of the self." They end their essay, published in the online collection *Into the Blogosphere*, with a speculation that perhaps blogs are evolving and that blogs might now constitute various genres, remediating previous print genres in a new digital media. Miller and Shepherd's choice to understand blogs through journals is motivated by their interest in the way blogs seem to blur the boundaries between public and private, remediating a private genre (the journal, generally read by only the writer or a few trusted others) in a public space (the Internet). However, with the proliferation of blogs since the late 1990s have come new genres of blogs, including co-authored blogs or edited blogs that share very little personal information, blogs whose sole purpose is to advertise products for sale, political campaign blogs, knowledge blogs, video blogs which seem to act more like television shows, podcasts published on blogs which are more like radio programming, and a variety of others. Research in rhetoric and composition is nascent in understanding the blog as a remediation of prior print genres that were explicitly public; though Miller and Shepherd do gesture toward newspaper editorials and columns, broadsides, pamphlets, and clipping services, they give little attention to how blogs actually work as public writing in relation to these previous genres. In this chapter I will focus on the genealogical ancestry of blogs by looking at a particular genre of public writing, one that, I believe, can give us as much insight into blogs and the blurring of public and private as do journals: zines (though, as I will explain later, perhaps *blurring* isn't the best word for this tension between public and private).

Miller, in "Genre as Social Action," writes that, "for the student, genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community" (165). When thinking about blogs and their use in the classroom, we certainly want to think about genre: particularly, the rhetorical situation that gives exigence to the choice of using blogs as social action. Miller argues "that a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" (151). This action "must involve situation and motive" (151). Agents typify rhetorical situations: they "determine" a situation by finding commonalities, similarities, or analogies among situations; once they typify a situation, they have created the recurrence. "What recurs is not a material situation (a real, objective, factual event) but our construal of a type" (157). Exigence, which is neither the speaker's intention nor the cause of the action, is social motive (158). Because genre is not solely defined by form but by recurrence of social situations and actions, genres are fluid and there is no set list of genres, but rather "an open class with new members evolving, old ones decaying" (153, citing Walter R. Fisher). Today this evolution of genres occurs even more quickly, for as Marcy Lassota Bauman notes, as technology changes more rapidly, the genres involved in those technologies also become less stable (270).

Miller and Shepherd are not the only researchers to focus mostly on more privately focused genres in the ancestry of blogs. Brooks, Nichols, and Priebe, when discussing the genres remediated in blogs, focus on the journal, the notebook, and the filter — the former two of which are largely private genres (Brooks, Nichols, and Priebe do not discuss the filter terms of publicity). In "Bridging the Gap: A Genre Analysis of Weblogs," one of the few large empirical studies of blogs, librarian and information sciences scholars Susan Herring et al. studied 203 randomly selected blogs in order to further understand the blog as an emerging genre. Their research shows "that the blog is neither fundamentally new nor unique" and found that most blogs seem to resemble online journals of the mid-1990s and print diaries (2, 10). In line with Miller and Shepherd, they found that blogs also remediate other genres, including editorials, research journals, post-it notes, travelogues, photo albums, and personal letters, concluding that "rather than having a single source, [blogs] are in fact a hybrid of existing genres" (10).

Despite this hybrid nature, though, blogs for Herring et al. work under the assumption there is "*the* emergent blog genre" ("Bridging" 1, emphasis added), and they fail to explore the possibilities for blogs as multiple genres. Drawing from the work of John Swales, they believe that because the blog is named and recognized by our culture, it warrants study as a single genre (2). However, their study lacks the nuance that would be necessary given the works of Miller and Swales from which they quote: "Miller's definition of a genre as 'typified rhetorical action based on recurrent situations,' ... [and] Swales characterizes a genre as 'a class of communicative events' having 'a shared set of communicative purposes' and similar structures, stylistic features, content, and intended audiences" (2). Their study fails to inquire how a diaristic blog and a filter blog arise out of "recurrent situations" or have "a shared set of communicative purposes." While Herring, *et al* do explore purpose in the blogs they study, their definition of the blog as a genre seems to be focused on form and substance, a definition which Miller warns is not rhetorically sound (151). Arguably, a genre can "have *sets* of communicative purposes" (Swales 47, emphasis original), but Herring et al. do not provide evidence that most blogs share a set of purposes; to the contrary, they delineate between blogs that have distinct and separate purposes: personal journal, filter, k-log, and other, with only 9.5% of the blogs studied having mixed purposes ("Bridging" 6).

Their conclusion that most blogs do not heavily link to other sites, but are more like journals or diaries ("Bridging" 10), is useful, but their definition of the blog as a genre is akin to defining the book as genre: it misses the different recurrent situations that give rise to a variety of different books or blogs. Few would argue that an encyclopedia, a pulp mystery novel, and an academic monologue constitute the same genre; they merely share the form of being bound between covers. While I am noting here the need to understand that blogs are a form and come in a variety of genres, I am not interested in developing a taxonomy or categorization of blogs according to genre. Rather, I am interested in gaining a fuller understanding of some blogs through a more public genealogical ancestor.

When we acknowledge that blogs may come out of various exigencies and social situations, it is important to consider in more depth genealogical ancestors to blogs, other than diaries and journals. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, the blogosphere constitutes a public sphere (or multiple publics), and one of James Bohman's requirements for the blogosphere as such is the possibility for an indefinite audience — the possibility that almost anyone can stumble across and read the work. Thus, it might be most beneficial to look at ancestral genres for the blog that carry a similar qualification. While some blogs certainly remediate the journal and notebook, these two print genres are often personal or have a very limited audience. A genealogical study of blogs through such genres as the editorial or newspaper opinion column could be useful, especially with the increase of j-blogs (most major newsprint companies now have editorial staff or columnists who blog regularly, and some independent journalists are now making a living mostly by blogging). I think, however, that more interesting genres are those which come out of the work of individuals or collectives not tied to corporate media interests, such as pamphlets and broadsides. To this list I would add newsletters published by collectives and zines published by individuals or collectives.

Zines, as described by Stephen Duncombe, “are noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves.” Zines “offer up an alternative, a way of understanding and acting in the world that operates with different values than those of consumer capitalism” (6). Duncombe places the birth of zines in the 1930s with the production of fanzines by science fiction fans (6), and notes that they come in a variety of forms and purposes. Admitting that it is hard to define zines, Duncombe writes that “[i]f pushed to come up with a single defining attribute I would have to say this: zines are decidedly *amateur*” (14, emphasis original).

Expanding on that idea, Duncombe writes that zines are written, not for money or notoriety, as are many publications from professionals, but out of love or rage (or perhaps both). They are akin to alternative culture from other positions, such as hip-hip and bohemian movements, and “are the most recent entry in a long line of media for the misbegotten, a tradition stretching back to Thomas Paine and other radical pamphleteers, up through the underground press of the 1960s, and on towards the Internet” (15). As of the late 1990s, it was estimated that there were somewhere between 10,000 and 50,000 zines in print in the United States (14). In “Criticism in the Zines: Vernacular Theory and Popular Culture,” Thomas McLaughlin, focusing mostly on fanzines and zines that are critical or analytical of popular culture, writes:

> Zines are full of unauthorized textual pleasures, full of what de Certeau calls 'poaching,' making [popular] texts mean what the reader needs them to mean, in the face of what their producers intended. [... E]ach zine *takes an attitude* rather than passively consuming pop texts, and each attitude taken has the urgency of resistance. Zines also have the urgency of personal engagement. Writers and editors of zines are not detached from the phenomena they describe. (54, emphasis original)

Duncombe's stance on the personal approach of zinesters is similar to McLaughlin's. According to Duncombe, zines have a different twist on the New Left slogan "the personal is political," remaking it into "the political is personal": "they refract all these [political] issues through the eyes and experience of the individual creating the zine. Not satisfied merely to open up the personal realm to political analysis, *they personalize politics*" (26, 28, emphasis original). Zines don't merely print political facts and statistics, but instead share lived experiences that are political: stories of dishwashing that reveal classism, stories of coming out that reveal homophobia, stories of running for office that reveal the corruption of democracy by money and politics — all told by the people involved (28).

I find zines to be particularly helpful in understanding the ancestral genealogy of blogs for a number of reasons: 1) the rhetorical situation is one in which the rhetor or rhetors have decided to engage in public writing, and thus the public sphere; 2) the audience is not general (that is, the rhetor usually has an audience in mind), but neither is the audience fully limited (there is not just one, or five, readers, but the possibility for many unintended readers); 3) many zines and newsletters are personal yet are also political: they have a stake in political meaning making in society; 4) zines challenge traditional notions of authorship; 5) zines are multigenre, multimodal palimpsests; and 6) zines are marked by circulation. A study of zines promises a fuller understanding of everyday literate activities outside of academia. And, like the literacy activities of bloggers, the literacy activities of zinesters has gone relatively unstudied by academics (Comstock 383). I would like to focus my attention in this chapter to zines in particular as a genealogical ancestor to blogs, with specific focus to *Fag Rag*, a 1970s queer zine put out by Boston's Gay Liberation Front. My decision to focus on *Fag Rag* instead of another zine, admittedly, comes from my own interest in understanding queer sexuality and the history of sexuality in our culture, as well as understanding the literacy activities of subaltern groups. My interest in *Fag Rag* led me to conduct archival research at the University of California, Davis, where I was able to study *Fag Rag* and other zines from the 1970s radical queer left, including *Gay Sunshine* out of San Francisco. While my focus in this chapter is not on the radical queer politics of the Gay Liberation Front, but is instead on the genealogical ancestry of blogs, I do feel it is worth noting here that a further study of *Fag Rag* and other zines would be worthwhile for understanding potentials for communicative democracy, as Jeffrey Escoffier does in *American Homo: Community and Perversity* through his study of ACT UP and Queer Nation.

As I will show, *Fag Rag* is a zine that "*takes an attitude*" and urges resistance and engages in the public sphere through this personal approach to politics. A study of *Fag Rag* gives us insights into the six reasons why I find zines to be a particularly productive genealogical ancestor to blogs. *Fag Rag* was the publication of the Boston Gay Male Liberation Front, beginning its printing in June 1971, coming shortly after the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City, which most historians believe marked a cultural shift in gay movements in America. Complacency with police brutality prior to 1969 made the events of June 28, 1969, even more surprising to the police who raided Stonewall Inn, leading to a violent fight between the police and gay men, lesbians, and drag queens. Historian Eric Marcus writes:

> The riot at the Stonewall Inn sent shock waves through New York's small homophile circles and the wider community of uninvolved gay men and women. The shock waves did not end at the city's boundaries. Because of New York City's role as the nation's communication's center, the riot at the Stonewall Inn was reported and broadcast across the nation. Although much of the news coverage was negative and relegated to the inside pages of newspapers, the startling word of gay people fighting back inspired the formation of new, and newly radical, "gay liberation" organizations in cities and on university campuses from coast to coast. (121)

The Stonewall Riots prompted a shift in the gay rights movement from more mainstream groups like the Mattachine Society in New York City that were largely composed of white people looking for mainstream acceptance of gay people, to the mobilization of leftist gay liberation groups that organized activism movements like a march shortly after Stonewall in New York, which drew somewhere between five hundred and two thousand protesters (132). The Gay Liberation Front (GLF), echoing the name of the National Liberation Front of the North Vietnam, was formed in New York City. The Vietcong was, according to co-founder of the GLF Martha Shelley "heroic in the eyes of the left, all of these little Vietnamese peasants running around in their conical hats and black pajamas, daring to stand up to the most powerful army in the world, with all its tanks and helicopters and napalm" (qtd. in Marcus 133).

In 1969 and 1970, GLF chapters sprung up throughout the country, including San Francisco, Boston, and Portland, Oregon, and were much more radical than the Mattachine Society or other earlier queer organizations. Members of the Boston GLF chapter published *Lavender Vision*, a newsprint rag, and then split into two groups when many of the gay men working on it left for San Francisco. A group of lesbian women decided to continue to publish *Lavender Vision* without the help of gay men, so a group of Bostonian men, as a collective named Gay Male Liberation, began to publish *Fag Rag*, a "Gay Male Newspaper" devoted to leftist and gay activism (*Fag Rag* #4, page 2). The first issue, published in June 1971, featured a facsimile of *American Gothic* on the cover with an elderly man replacing the original image of the woman. The content of *Fag Rag* was decidedly leftist and activist, and the zine promoted and described protests and parades and made radical demands for change. According to co-founder Roger Goodman, the founding community of *Fag Rag*

> thought that we needed a way of promulgating radical queer political ideology, disseminating community information, and making public queer human interest stories in the form of 'portraits' of individual gaymen [*sic*] and lesbians in the political community, where there had been no vehicle for this in the past. (Goodman 5)

Fag Rag continued to be published and distributed for about a decade before ceasing publication; I do not have access to its circulation numbers or where it was distributed, though I know that its readership ranged across the country.

In the following sections, I will explore the ways in which zines serve as appropriate genealogical ancestors to blogs, with particular attention to the reasons zines are a particularly productive site of study.

Exigency: Validity in the Public

Miller and Shepherd write that for blogs there is "some widely shared, recurrent need for cultivation and validation of the self," similar to the exigencies that lead people to keep diaries or journals. However, this recurrent need in journals and diaries is one that is directed toward the self: one keeps a journal or diary in order to cultivate and validate the self privately. For blogs, however, this exigence takes a public turn, in which the blogger seeks self-cultivation and validation in the public. Zines, I believe, often rise out of a similar exigence. The first issue of *Fag Rag* opens with the article “Fallen Superstar” about going to the concert of Phil Ochs, the grand finale of the “Gay Weekend at U Mass Amherst.” Ochs finished a song and then said to the crowd, “I'm just a regular guy, you know, not some kind of fag.” Gay men in the crowd began to protest, and Ochs states that “he was only using the term in a 'theatrical' (his exact word) sense. He just couldn't understand why we were so uptight” (*Fag Rag* #1, p. 3). The article continues and warrants quoting at length:

> When this jive failed to stop our chanting, failed to stop our protest, Phil changed his tactics. He said he had the right to use any word he wanted, after all, it was *his* performance and we had no right to impinge on his right by interupting [*sic*] *his* performance. He went on to say that it was most unfortunate that the Movement’s good name could be slurred by such a “scatter brained” element (i.e. us), that we were exercising “the tyranny of the minority over the majority” by depriving all the decent (i.e. straight) people in the crowd of their afternoon of enjoyment. The audience (composed mainly of straight white middle class student types) heartily agreed with Phil – they didn’t want to be shaken from their academic slumber long enough to consider the fact that the use of the word faggot just might be oppressive and dehumanizing to a gay person – they came to hear music – they just weren’t in the mood to be bothered by a bunch of uppity gay men. (p. 3)

Soon the protesters took to the stage, told Ochs to step aside, and read poetry and shared stories about gay men who had been beaten. This narrative represents a need for validation as humans and gay men and a demand to not be typified as faggots, either by the mainstream or by other activists and radicals on the margins. The publication of *Fag Rag* is akin to taking the microphone at the stage of the Ochs concert; perhaps the publishers did not have the power to take the analogous "microphone" from other authoritative public texts, but they were, through their publication, able to erect their own microphone and create a counterpublic. As part of the radical larger Gay Liberation Front movement, the publishers of *Fag Rag* had lofty goals, as seen in their desire for the legalization of all sex between consenting adults, a drastic revamping of the judicial system, the abolition of capital punishment, the end to third-world poverty, and an end to the military-industrial complex (*Fag Rag* #2, p. 8), but the rag's exigence is mirrored in New York City's GLF co-founder Martha Shelley's words: "I just wanted to make the world safe for me, so I could live in my house and enjoy my life without feeling that I was going to get thrown in jail or lose my job for sleeping with a woman" (qtd. in Marcus 131).

I prefer to think of exigence in the terms offered by David Hunsaker and Craig Smith in "The Nature of Issues: A Constructive Approach to Situational Rhetoric." They see exigence as a matter of privation, "the difference between the present situation and what it potentially could be" (146), what Lloyd Bitzer calls "a shadow" or "imperfection marked by some degree of urgency" ("Functional" 26). From this privation arise potential issues that are constrained by relevance, rhetorical capability to structure and resolve conflict, and the audience (Hunsaker and Smith 147). For the publishers of *Fag Rag*, this privation seems to be the difference between a homophobic society in which the authors felt invalidated and unsafe, and what our society could be: a place safe and validating for people with a variety of ways of living. Some zines, like *Fag Rag*, are concerned with the validation and cultivation of multiple selves and even whole types of people (non-heterosexual folks, in the case of *Fag Rag*), whereas other zines are written more for the cultivation and validation of the author/publisher. These "'[p]erzines,' or personal zines," writes Duncombe,

> read like the intimate diaries usually kept safely hidden in the back of a drawer or under a pillow. Personal revelation outweighs rhetoric, and polished literary style takes a back seat to honesty. Unlike most personal diaries, however, these intimate thoughts, philosophical musings, or merely events of the day retold are written for an outside audience. (21)

Duncombe continues that writers of perzines are not unique for their honesty or personal storytelling; authors have been publishing honest, personal stories for centuries. What makes the zinester unique, much like the blogger, is that they "lack of connections and credentials to be published, yet they do it anyway" (22).

The exigencies of blogs, as I quoted Miller and Shepherd earlier, come from "some widely shared, recurrent need for cultivation and validation of the self" (Miller and Shepherd). While Miller and Shepherd see this as analogous to the exigencies of diaries and journals, I see it as just as analogous to the exigencies of zines, and perhaps more so because of the public turn that both blogs and zines take. Zinesters and bloggers seem to share this assumption of authority in a society that has granted them little or no authority in public discourse. The men who published *Fag Rag*, because they were gay, were discredited in society at large; I have read zines by folks who have little power in larger society: teenage girls, queer folk, homeless people, punks, people with mental disorders, feminists, single mothers. Many blogs too seem to often come from this privation of validity, but with their ease of publishing more people have turned to blogging.[5] Because zines and blogs are public discourse, it is important to consider the ways they function as public texts, and also the ways in which the texts work in relation to the public.

Counterpublicity

In “Publics and Counterpublics,” Michael Warner makes distinctions between three uses of the word *public*, concepts that we often conflate when we evoke the term: 1) *the* public, “a kind of social totality” such as a nation; 2) “a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible space, as with a theatrical public”; and 3) the concept that interests Warner the most in his essay, “the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation” (49, 50). This third kind of public, different from *the* public as a totality and a specific audience bound to an event, is commonly evoked and understood, but its rules are never explained. Warner sets out to explain these “rather odd” rules of publics: a public 1) “*is self-organized*,” “exist[ing] *by virtue of being addressed*”; 2) “*is a relation among strangers*”; 3) is addressed in both personal and impersonal terms; 4) “*is constituted through mere attention*”; 5) “*is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse*”; 6) “*act[s] historically according to the temporality of their [texts’] circulation*”; and 7) “*is poetic world-making*” (50, 55, 57, 60, 62, 68, 82, emphasis original). Warner believes that counterpublics act in the same way, except, “counterpublic discourse also addresses those strangers as not just anybody. Addresses are socially marked by their participation in this kind of discourse; ordinary people are presumed to not want to be mistaken for the kind of person who would participate in this kind of talk or be present in this kind of scene” (86). Also, as I have noted in the previous interchapter, Warner insists that a counterpublic does not have to be subaltern, as Fraser describes them, but can be understood as “a scene for developing oppositional interpretations of its members’ identities, interests, and needs” (86).

Counterpublics also have an awareness at some level, whether conscious or not, of their subordinate status to dominant culture (86).

In "Counterpublicity and Corporeality in HIV/AIDS Zines," Daniel Brouwer offers an understanding of zines as constituting counterpublics. He argues that *Diseased Pariah News* and *Infected Faggot Perspectives*, two zines from the 1990s written by and for gay men with HIV/AIDS, "constitute counterpublics through thematization of two important forms of difference: blood status (HIV-positive or HIV-negative) and political ideology" (352). Drawing on the works of Fraser, Duncombe, J.E. Muñoz, J. Mansbridge, and L.A. Flores, Brouwer discusses the "significant ways" that "zines aim to constitute counterpublics":

> Perceiving their zines as "free space" alternatives to mainstream media and culture, zine creators occupy dissident or oppositional stances and articulate their claims from perceived positions of marginality or exclusion. In this way, zines often function as counterpublics, as Fraser defines this. With counterpublics understood in this way, "counterpublicity," in turn, names those acts that are "representational *and* political interventions in the service of...counterpublics." Representational and political interventions take a wide range of forms. In zines, these interventions might include naming enemies and allies, offering deliberative arguments, crafting oppositional interpretations, deploying indigenous cultural codes, creating fantastical scenarios, and more. (354)

Brouwer finds that *Infected Faggot Perspectives* constitutes a counterpublic by virtue of the political ideology it espouses: that of queer politics, as opposed to the gay politics that "posits relatively stable gay and lesbian identities, minimizes differences between people of varying sexual orientations, and calls for inclusion of LGBT people within the institutions, policies, and practices that heterosexual, normatively gendered people enjoy" (357). Like *Infected Faggot Perspectives*, *Fag Rag*'s ideological basis is in radical queer politics, which “rejects liberal faith in institutional inclusion, disavows assimilation as a political goal, and displaces the state as a/the primary forum for redress” (357).

The radical queer politics of *Fag Rag* permeate the magazine and make the constitution of a community difficult and tumultuous. Already, *Fag Rag* had separated from *Lavender Vision* when the lesbians in the group took on radical separatist politics and desired that the men leave and take up a new project (Goodman 5). Community development would continue to be difficult, especially as the radical members of Gay Male Liberation desired to be more inclusive and bring less radical people in the fold. However, more conservative men were not ready to listen to the radical voices of *Fag Rag*. One reader complained of their first issue that it was a boring rag that didn't show enough penises. *Fag Rag* has “no sense of humor. All that shit about 'Pigs' – is now passé – the revolution and crap. Grow up dopes.” The writer ends the letter by offering to show the writers of *Fag Rag* how to have fun and “see some real cocksucking” if they come to a certain club at eleven at night (*Fag Rag* #2, page 2). While *Fag Rag* could speak for some gay men, it certainly couldn't speak for all (and perhaps not even many) — or, more accurately, it didn't speak with the same consciousness as other gay men.

Since *Fag Rag* didn’t speak with the same consciousness as many other gay men in the 1970s, it thus didn’t speak *to* them directly. While the creators of *Fag Rag* understood and desired that their magazine would be read by a variety of people, the intended audience of *Fag Rag* was mostly gay men with a similar political consciousness as the writers — or at least a developing consciousness. The readership of *Fag Rag* was certainly a collection of strangers who were self-organized through their own attention to *Fag Rag*. Intended readers (as opposed to incidental readers) shared a personal identification with *Fag Rag*. Warner adds to our understanding of public writing in its simultaneous personal and impersonal speech:

> Public speech can have great urgency and intimate import. Yet we know that it was addressed not exactly to us, but to the stranger we were until the moment we happened to be addressed by it. ... To inhabit public discourse is to perform this transition continually, and to some extent it remains present to consciousness. Public speech must be taken in two ways: as addressed to us and as addressed to strangers. The benefit in this practice is that it gives a general social relevance to private thought and life. Our subjectivity is understood as having resonance with others, and immediately so. But this is only true to the extent that the trace of our strangerhood remains present in our understanding of ourselves as the addressee. (57-58)

Public discourse, then, differs from private discourse in that it is not just personal:

> [P]ublics are different from persons, that the address of public rhetoric is never going to be the same as address to actual persons, and that our partial *nonidentity* with the object of address in public speech seems to be part of what it means to regard something as public speech. (58)

We can see that the reader of *Fag Rag* quoted above shows this mix of personal and impersonal reading: he identifies with the zine as much as it is for gay men, but dis-identifies with its political stance.

A problem with the continued construal of blogs as descended from the private journal is that this genealogy devalues the public audience of blogs. Private journals serve as personal communication, most often to the self and occasionally to a select few others. The audience of zines, however, is explicitly public and engages in counterpublicity. Blogs, for the most part, are also counterpublic, with an intended audience that is counterpublic, but also with either the intention or understanding that a wider public might read it. Some of the counterpublics are, as Fraser defines them, subaltern: constituted by political queer blogs, feminist blogs, anti-racist blogs, etc. Others are not subaltern, and are directed toward interests: science fiction, rhetoric, bicycles, sociology, online gaming, etc. Even some blogs that are more about individuals' personal lives serve, I believe, to construct a counterpublic out of their readership. Much like a perzine, while most intended readers of a personal blog may know the blogger, they do not necessarily have to know each other; they are a self-organized counterpublic of composed of strangers. I wouldn't make the argument that all personal blogs constitute counterpublics, for a counterpublic is, to restate Warner's description, "a scene for developing oppositional interpretations of its members' identities, interests, and needs" (86). This important aspect of counterpublicity — some form of opposition — is certainly not present in some (if not many) personal blogs. These blogs might best be understood as remediating a mixture of zines, diaries, and personal newsletters sent out to family and friends.

Tensions between personal and political / private and public

Though arguably all texts negotiate tensions between the personal and political and between the private and public, even if not explicitly, these tensions operate explicitly and in similar ways in zines and blogs. Zines often "*personalize politics*" and provide a forum to put private issues into public writing (Duncombe 28, 21-22, emphasis original) and blogs "blur" boundaries between personal and public (Miller and Shepherd). Many blogs and zines include very personal writing made public. *Fag Rag*, for instance, includes a father's coming out story titled "Father Knows Best," but this story does not stop short at the personal, but instead goes on to *personalize politics* by expressing his desire that his sons not suffer from the sickness of being "straight":

> [My brothers] were losing what I now call their gayness and were moving into that sickness I call the straight world. And it has nothing to do with whom one had sex. it [*sic*] is the attitude that man's tool makes him superior to women. It is the attitude that a man's relation to another is aggressive and competitive. If he shows emotion, it is a female weakness. If he gently caresses a brother's hair, he is suspected of being somewhat less of a man. And, my God, if he touches his brother anywhere between waist and knee, he is sick! Bullshit! The gay man recognizes the oppression of women and strives to erase the prejudices which stand in the way of relating to them as equal beings. The gay man appreciates the softness that should be a part of all men. The gay man gives up his privileged position of power and glories in his femininity. That's what I want for my boys! (*Fag Rag* #2, p. 15)

This article is the personal story of a gay man coming out to his sons and struggling over how to explain what "gay" means to himself and his sons. Instead of stopping there, though, the author explores the political realm (what does it mean in our society to be a man?) and then personalizes it: "That's what I want for my boys!" Though anonymous, his personal life — part of his private sphere — and his political views, wrapped in with each other, are made public. The writing in zines — and in blogs — calls into question the supposedly distinct boundaries between personal and private spheres — assumed stable boundaries that feminists have critiqued and argued as ideological (Gal 78).

In "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," feminist Susan Gal analyzes the public/private dichotomy, noting that most feminist theorizing has stopped short of a sufficient exploration of the private/public distinction and instead relies on "the cartographic metaphors of everyday life" (79), using terms or phrases such as "renegotiated" lines and "stability and instability in the boundaries that separate these regions of social life" (79, qting. Joan Landes). Similarly, in their discussion of blogs and genre, Miller and Shepherd use the cartographic metaphor of "blurred boundaries." However, Gal argues that these metaphors are incomplete, not doing justice to the complexity of the private/public distinction (79). Gal describes the public/private distinction as "indexical," as are the sex/gender and political affiliation (left/right) dichotomies, "that is, linked to occasion and situation, not fixed or permanently laminated to individuals" (86). The public/private dichotomy "is a particular kind of indexical," what Gal calls a "fractal distinction": "Whatever the local, historically specific context of the dichotomy, the distinction between public and private can be reproduced repeatedly by projecting it into narrower contexts or broader ones" (81). Gal gives many examples of this fractal distinction: the home is private when compared to the public street around it; the living room is public, though, in relation to the rest of the house. However, "even the relatively public living room can be recalibrated ... by momentary gestures or utterances, voicings that are iconic of privacy and thus create less institutionalized and more spontaneous spatial divisions toward interaction." Similarly, the street shares similar fractal properties: the street and sidewalk are public, until a storeowner sweeps her front sidewalk, creating a private space (82).

Of particular interest here is Gal's example of the *samizdat*, the underground dissenting zine movement in Eastern Europe before the fall of Communism. *Samizdats* "were understood by actors as 'politics,' and hence public," but were produced in the private sphere of the home; "the private was imagined as subdivided, having a public embedded within it" (88). This fractal distinction of the public/private dichotomy is common to zines, which are often created in a private place (the home), which, through the process of creating public work, becomes a public-within-the-private. Zines sometimes start small, circulating merely among friends, but when a friend passes the zine along to a stranger, or a zine is left somewhere public such as in a library or coffee shop, the context shifts, and a private communication becomes public. Even the process of reading zines involves fractal shifts in private and public. The act of reading a zine in an independent bookstore is a private act of reading of a public text with personal (private) stories in a space that is either public (open to all) or private (owned as a private business), depending on perspective. But as soon as the storeowner or stranger asks what one is reading, the act becomes public, or may be perceived as a private act invaded by the public eye. Writing and reading on the screen has similar implications: someone writing a blog post in their living room has subdivided the private space of her home and computer into both a private and public space; a reader of a blog post performs a private reading of a public blog post, perhaps at home (dividing the private space of the home into private and public) or at a public computer (dividing off a private space in the public computer lab). If the blog post is diaristic and read by a friend, the post is read as a private text until shared with others (perhaps emailed to a listserve or linked to on the reader's blog), in which case the text becomes public.

Gal's understanding of the public/private dichotomy allows us to understand that "there is no simple continuum of public to private," but the problem with "the indexical and fractal nature of the dichotomy [is that it] allows for the denial or erasure of some levels or contexts of distinction, as people focus on other contexts" (91). This becomes most obvious with blogs that are very personal in nature when a blogger is surprised that her blog is read by employers, parents, coworkers, or strangers; the blogger has focused on one context (the context in which the blog is read as "personal") and fails to see other contexts, where it is "public". Focusing on blogs as the descendents of diaries allows us to understand that *something* different is happening with private and public spheres (what Miller and Shepherd call a "blurring"), but understanding blogs as more like zines allows us to see more fully the fractal nature of the public/private dichotomy. Understanding this fractal nature allows us to understand how a blogger might protest that her blog is private when it is read by employers.

The ways in which blogs and zines negotiate the tensions of private and public might also offer for a progressive renegotiation of what is considered political and private in the public sphere. As I noted in Chapter 2, Nancy Fraser has pointed to how many distinctions of public ignore or marginalize private issues that have public import, such as domestic abuse (Fraser 19-22). Additionally, as Henry Giroux explains, the rise of neoliberalism since the 1980s has served to privatize and commercialize our society, making it difficult for citizens to think of private problems within public contexts (35). The recent increase of the insertion of private lives and stories into the public sphere offers *potential* for online dialogue about what concerns could or should be considered of public concern; however, there is nothing guaranteed here, and I must stress that this is only a potential.

Challenges to Traditional Notions of Authorship

Just as zines and blogs both challenge the notion of a stable public/private dichotomy, they also challenge traditional notions of authorship. Duncombe writes of zines: "Material is also 'borrowed': pirated from other zines and the mainstream press, sometimes without credit, invariably without permission" (10). While Duncombe's description is not necessarily true of *Fag Rag*, this particular zine does challenge traditional notions of authorship. The first three issues only list contributors, often with pseudonyms or only first names, and do no attribute specific articles or duties to specific people. The first issue of *Fag Rag* includes this list of contributors:

> FAG RAG WAS PUT TOGETHER BY:
>
> kevin mc girr, lester heumann, steve barru, charlie, steven mirman, steve lowell, bob, john mitzel, larry martin, allan troxler, donald, allan berube, john, rebelle, richard, marcus, craig smith
>
> Dr. Reuben tells us in *Everything You Wanted To Know About Sex But Were Afraid To Ask: "Few homosexuals use their real names, they*

> *generally chose aliases with sexual connotations, Harry, Peter and Dick are most favored.*[*"*] (p. 2)

Fag Rag's contributors listing calls explicit attention to anonymity. It isn't until issue 3 that the editors explain their use of anonymity and collective authorship listing:

> In the past we have not used any by-lines, because each article has been the result of long discussion, writing and rewriting in which all of us were involved. Inevitably, our spirit might be expressed in one particular voice, but that voice has in the past only articulated the medium of which we have all been parts. We have also hesitated to "credit" articles, photos, or drawings to certain individuals because that would seem to imply that those who edited, typed, layed [*sic*] out and distributed the paper were less noteworthy. (p. 1)

Fag Rag begins to give credit to authors for specific contributions in issue 4, and even then, not all contributions in the issue are credited, and those who design and distribute *Fag Rag* are still listed in the collecive. *Fag Rag* is typical of many other zines, which challenge traditional notions of a single author and instead have collective authorship, giving as much credit to those who do layout, drawing, or distribution as writing.

Zines, then, often (though definitely not always) question traditional authorship, either by claiming a collective authorship or by collecting material from other sources and not acknowledging the original authors. Similarly, many blogs do so in much the same way. Some are pseudonymously published, leaving the identity of the blogger unknown. Especially true for beginning bloggers who do not know html code or linking and quoting etiquette is a tendency to quote from other websites or sources without hyperlinks or attribution. Additionally, as I will discuss later, there is an indeterminate nature of blogs (that is, they are not fixed texts, but are ever-changing), as commenters and the blog host are constantly changing the blog; when there are many commenters, we should ask if there is an "authorship" to the blog. Perhaps bloggers might be better understood as *hosts* instead of *authors*; in this way, bloggers are *hosting* a public space in which to foster discussion, rather than (in the romantic sense) creating something new and unique, which they should thus "own" via traditional conceptions of intellectual property.

We might also view bloggers as more like editors than authors. As Michelle Comstock says of the grrrl zine counterpublic in "Grrrl Zine Networks: Re-Composing Spaces of Authority, Gender, and Culture," creating a zine "is less an act of authorship in the conventional sense than an act of critical editorship" (394). Comstock notes the ways authorship of grrrl zines is more a "networked authorship" with "methods of critical pastiche," a "[resistance of] mainstream and academic notions of authorship as ownership," and an "impropriety stand[ing] in direct opposition to the ethics and values of another writing scene — the university classroom" (394-395). Social capital is not based on profits or one's singular authorship, but instead on "renown" through citation in other zines and catalogues and through circulation, resulting in "the final 'pay-off': membership in the network" (396). With the exceptions of those blogs used to make money and some celebrity blogs, blogs seem to work the same way as these grrrl zines: eschewing traditional authorship in favor of a networked one, and depending on citation in order to gain social capital and membership into a network.

Zinesters and bloggers, then, are more like editors or hosts of public spaces than traditional authors as owners of content. For a blogger, this editorship involves processes of selecting material to put on the blog, citing, collaging, juxtaposing, finding sites to link to, filtering content, moderating comments, and composing a blogroll. Because of this editorial stance of the blogger and zinester, both blogs and zines also share another commonality: They are palimpsests with multigeneric, multimodal, and polyphonic conventions.

Multigeneric, Multimodal, Polyphonic Conventions of Palimpsests

Within an issue of *Fag Rag* one can find essays, letters, photos, drawings, rants, poems, songs lyrics, and pieces that blur boundaries. In issue 2 of *Fag Rag*, a piece of writing begins, “this is going to be an essay on liberation” (p. 13). However, instead of the traditional essay form, the writer(s) includes art and poetry laced together on the page. An essay becomes a blurred genre act: it is at once essay, poetry, and art. Similarly, blogs remediate multiple genres or modes, often within a single post, where one can find an embedded video, song lyrics printed, essayistic or rant-style writing, images such as photographs or artwork, and other works. Blogs, then, have been built like zines; in the words of Raina Lee, publisher of the zine *1-Up*: “Zines are for those who go beyond conventional writing and opt for a melody of word and pictures, vision and thought – cut out, glued, photocopied, and all stapled together” (16). Blogs, metaphorically, are often also “cut out, glued, photocopied, and all stapled together” — they are often “messy.”

Many zines, too, are palimpsests, with print and images collaged on top of each other. Words might be crossed out and replaced with new words. Publishing a zine is often a process of collaging new material over older material, sometimes until the “original text” the zinester began with is irretrievable by the reader. Blogs, too, work similarly, with older content somewhat obscured by the more recent content placed “on top” of the older content. Newer content is placed on the “font page” with older content forced further back to be retrieved by the reader. Blog posts themselves are often palimpsest in nature, since the blogger has the ability to go back and edit content, either explicitly with some form of "edit" signposting or covertly with minor edits or changes. Unlike zines, though, most blogs' older content is retrievable, as the blog serves more like a database. Nevertheless, the palimpsest nature of blogs is there.

Additionally, blogs change the function of writing, from an emphasis on final product to an emphasis on the immediate. Online discussions meet immediate needs, changing timeframes of circulation and publication; the goal of writing online is "not to create a document that will stand for all time or even to create a coherent metatext. People writing these hypertexts literally cannot decide to shape them, because the shape is not within anyone's control" (Lassota Bauman 276-277). A zine may be distributed as a final product, but a blog rarely stands as such; with the ability for others to comment and the ability for the blogger to go back and edit a post, the blog is hardly a stable, single-authored form. Instead, it offers a "mess" with multiple authors, some named, some anonymous, some pseudonymous. People may add comments to blog posts or discussion boards years after the original post (Lassota Bauman found that anonymous people were posting to a class's discussion board a year after the class ended [279]). The blog text with commenting is ever evolving and never stable, until commenting has been disabled and the blogger decides to cease blogging. This indeterminacy of blogs is important, for "[s]trategies that attempt to make sense of finished texts will be of limited use in helping to navigate and understand such indeterminate texts" (280). As literary scholar Reinaldo Laddaga notes, "new forms of verbal art ... no longer devote themselves to producing the kind of fixed text that has been the canonical form of verbal art in modernity" (449).

The editorial stance of zinesters and bloggers allows for a polyphonic architecture of the text that also mirrors an architecture of the self or selves. If the exigence of zines and blogs comes from the recurrent need for validation and cultivation of the self, as I discussed earlier, this polyphonic nature of zines and blogs is also related to the editor(s). While traditional notions of authorship are challenged in both zines and blogs, there is still a "presence" of the self or selves, though this presence is explicitly not univocal. While earlier I focused on the validation of selves in the public sphere, we can also focus on cultivation and identity formation. By blending and juxtaposing various voices in a text, zinesters and bloggers are developing their own identities and authorities in a public space. The link between authorship and identity has been explored: Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist write, "The architectonic activity of authorship, which is the building of a text, parallels the activity of human existence, which is the building of a self" (qtd. in Daly 1). As fiction writer and literary theorist Lance Olsen writes, "We are all, as Roland Barthes pointed out so long ago, texts, and a text is 'a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash'" (568, qting. Barthes). Blogs, as polyphonic texts, allow for this multivocality that allows the editor to juxtapose herself with and against various other voices. As Nancy Sommers writes, "It *is* in the thrill of the pull between someone else's authority and our own, between submission and independence that we must discover how to define ourselves" (285, emphasis original). Because a blog is polyphonic and a palimpsest — a continual layering on of new text on top of old — it mirrors the identity cultivation of the blogger. This isn't a claim I'm trying to make universally true of all blogs (it is certainly not true of advertising blogs, among others), but it seems true for some of those that are more personal in nature. The explicit use of various modes, genres, and voices within a blog allows for a different form of authority or expertise to be developed in the public sphere than texs that appear more univocal in nature.

Circulation

Issues of editorship, hosting public spaces, and citation bring me to my last point about zines and blogs: they circulate in public. For Warner, circulation is one of the key aspects of a public, for a public "*is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse*" (Warner 62, emphasis original). Though *Fag Rag* attempted to publish regularly, they weren't quite able to do so. Explaining that "we are faggots with a lot else to do" and that their membership was constantly in flux, the collective creating *Fag Rag* was unable to publish regularly ("Fag Rag Blues 2," *Fag Rag* #3, page 1). This is indicative of most zines, but also of blogs. Few blogs, except ones with large readership and staff or the occasional dedicated personal blogger, publish on a set schedule; instead most bloggers publish when they make time. Unlike corporate or small business newspapers and magazines, which publish daily, weekly, monthly, or bimonthly, both zines and blogs are set to the schedule that the writers/creators make. While blogs are certainly similar to diaries with timestamps, I believe they act more similarly to zines, but with more frequent publishing. This is because of their often-haphazard circulation schedule. With the recent development of free, easily useable RSS readers like Google Reader or Bloglines, blog circulation is even more periodical-like, with posts delivered to the reader's own site, much like the delivery of magazines or newspapers to one's mailbox. (Common Craft's video on RSS feeds is an excellent introduction to how RSS feeds and readers work.)

Warner's emphasis on the circulation in his description of public discourse calls into question the traditional notion of discourse as a conversation with the sender-receiver or author-reader model. Warner writes, "It is not texts themselves that create publics, but the concatenation of texts through time. Only when a previously existing discourse can be supposed, and a responding discourse be postulated, can a text address a public" (62). A problem with the conversation model of public discourse is that it lacks a notion of circulation — that dialogue not only addresses specific audiences by also onlookers:

> The interactive relation postulated in public discourse, in other words, goes far beyond the scale of conversation or discussion, to encompass a multigeneric lifeworld organized not just by a relational axis of utterance and response, but by potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization. (63)

We must recognize the temporality of circulation of a text in order to recognize it as public discourse, according to Warner (66). Warner notes that with the rise of Internet sites where it becomes increasingly hard to tell when the site was last updated, "Web discourse has very little of the citation field that would allow us to speak of it as discourse unfolding through time" (69). Web discourse's circulation is "increasingly organized as continuous rather than punctual" (69). However, this is more true for websites that are not archived and do not work with syndication. Newspaper's websites, webcomics, many wikis, online journals, and blogs are often archived and timestamped, leaving a system of circulation in place, though in the case of wikis, webcomics, and blogs, the circulation may not be punctual. (While I believe that circulation still exists among blogs, I wonder along with Warner if circulation is indeed being de-emphasized as a criteria of public discourse; do blog readers view it as circulation, as an aspect of time, or, as Johndan Johnson-Eilola has noted of postmodernism, are they more organized along space, along an interface ["Living" 190]?)

Warner notes another aspect of the circulation of public discourse: it is reflexive. His example is the *Spectator*, an early eighteenth-century periodical. Letters from readers, essays which referred to previous essays, and allusions to its own popularity add up to a reflexivity that serves to link readers to other readers: "It describes private and individual acts of reading, but in such a way as to make temporally indexed circulation among strangers the immanent meaning and emotional resonance of those reading acts" (71). The circulation of zines and blogs is often reflexive as well; as I have noted above, the publishers of *Fag Rag* explicitly discussed their publishing schedule and include letters from the editors. Bloggers too often apologize for not posting recently, include comments from readers, re-post some comments within posts and respond to them, and refer to or link to to previous posts on the same blog. This type of reflexivity to circulation is an important aspect for understanding zines as a genealogical ancestor to blogs; while diaries are often self-reflexive (as Viviane Serfaty notes of print diaries, online diaries, and blogs [31]), their reflexivity is focused internally, without linking readers to the text and to each other.

A Public Ancestry to Blogs: Summary

While studies of blogs that seek to understand them as descendents of diaries are useful, it is important to have a deeper understanding of blogs as descendent from other texts, particularly public ones. By focusing here on zines, I mean to show the ways in which blogs function and circulate as public texts and constitute public readerships. This public readerships is often a counterpublic — a specific public audience that is limited in scope and not the general public. Blogs address their readers in both personal and impersonal ways, so that readers both identify and non-identify with the text. Blogs also represent the fractal and indexical nature of the public/private dichotomy, and bloggers often personalize politics. Also, blogging can call into question traditional notions of authorship, with collaborative authorship and a more polyphonic authorship that is more akin to hosting a forum or editorship. This editorship raises interesting issues about the palimpsest nature of blogs and the ways in which multiple genres, modes, and voices are included. Polyphony of voices on blogs also affects the identity cultivation of bloggers, including their development of authority. Lastly, blogs circulate with reflexivity. With this understanding of blogs in mind, I would like to turn to some pedagogical implications, some of which are directly related to blogs, but others of which I believe are more widely applicable to the composition classroom.

I have organized these implications around discussions of exigencies in the classroom, audience, issues of privacy and publicity, editorship and multimodality, and delivery. The implications I discuss below often engage in difficult controversies in regards to first-year composition, and, while I don't mean to make totalizing claims about what a classroom should look like, I do want to stress here that I believe students should be primarily (though not solely) writing for audiences beyond just the teacher. My conclusions might be more easily applicable in an advanced composition classroom, where the institutional mission of first-year composition are not present, but ideally I see these conclusions applied to first-year composition courses as well, though locational constraints do need to be accounted for.

Exigencies in the Classroom

To begin, it seems apparent that the classroom needs to find ways to produce or recreate exigencies that will lead to writing that moves beyond the technical delivery of student papers to a teacher. As I quoted Linda Brodkey in the epigraph to this chapter, "If you want students to learn to write, students who for years have been learning *not* to write, it is probably a good idea to recreate the circumstances under which others have turned to writing" (140). However, developing motivating exigencies in the classroom is a difficult task, due in part to the artificiality of the classroom, the power difference between teachers and students, grading, the fact that assignments are required, and the institutional mission of many first-year composition courses to prepare students for writing they will perform in other classes. As Philip Burns notes, "exigency and audience are probably the two most elusive elements in the conventional writing classroom" (130). James Moffett adds:

> While acknowledging that artificiality cannot be eliminated completely from the classroom situation, somehow we must create more realistic communication "dramas" in which the student can practice being a [speaker and a listener] with better motivation and in a way more resembling how he will have to read, write, speak, and listen in the "afterlife." (qtd. in Benson and Latchaw 87, bracketed material Benson and Latchaw's)

In "Creating Rhetorical Exigencies," Chris Benson and Joan Latchaw share stories of two rhetorical situations that arose in their writing classrooms that led to collaborative, public work from their students. In Benson's classroom, students were approached by the Assistant Manager of the Microcomputing Center at his university and asked to work on a collaborative user's manual for the university's e-mail system because the Center's funding had been cut (89-92). Latchaw describes the process in her classroom of students responding to a rape on campus and requesting to change the course from a focus on Lewis Thomas's *The Medusa and the Snail* to a focus on writing about rape and abuse (92-95). I am reminded of one of my most rewarding classes as an undergraduate, Rhetorical Criticism, when, the day after September 11, 2001, we drastically refocused the class to responding to the rhetoric surrounding the terrorist attacks. While this shift was rewarding in that we students were studying something that had material importance in our lives (how were the government, various media, and our friends and relatives responding to these events?), the class began to lose focus as the semester dragged on. I suspect, had we turned to public writing and had students been engaging each other more in the process, that students' engagement in the topic might have remained high and not dwindled out.

I believe that by engaging students in the electronic public sphere, we may find exigencies that arise, rather than ones that are prescribed; of course, this raises the difficulty that "students are likely to respond to questions and in ways that we as teachers may neither anticipate nor desire" (Burns 131). The composition course should be, I believe, in relation to issues, beliefs, ideas, and events with personal relevance to their lives. I am, of course, not saying anything new in this statement. What is important is that texts students read are ones that circulate in the public sphere and have connections to their lives, and that their writing is in response to those texts. Here I am grappling with one of most difficult issues of teaching required first-year composition: what do students read and to whom do they write? As Christy Friend stresses, it is important for students to respond to texts in ways that they can be engaged in current public conflicts and "in shaping the outcome of any particular debate" (666). This raises questions about the discourses students enter and the audiences they wish to reach.

Discourses, Audiences, and Counterpublicity

In *A Teaching Subject*, Joseph Harris suggests that rather than view our work as teaching students to enter a discourse community, we instead teach students to be able to negotiate various discourses. *Discourse community* for Harris is "little more than a notion — hypothetical and suggestive, powerful yet ill-defined" (101). Harris quotes the beginning of David Bartholomae's essay "Inventing the University":

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion — invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like history or anthropology or economics or English. The student has to learn *to speak our language, to speak as we do*, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define *the discourse of our community*. (Bartholomae 623, qtd. in Harris 100, emphasis is Harris's)

Harris points to the subtle shifting that Bartholomae performs, so that academic discourse shifts "from something that a writer must continually reinvent to something that has already been invented, a language that 'we' have access to but that many of our students do not" (Harris 100). The term *community* is hard to resist "since what is invoked is a community of those in power, of those who know the accepted ways of writing and interpreting texts" (100). I have already covered some of Harris' critique of *community* in Chapter 2, but it is worth adding here that Harris, following Raymond Williams, notes that we are never members of a single community. "Rather than framing our work in terms of helping students move from one community of discourse into another," Harris writes, “it might prove more useful (and accurate) to view our task as adding to or complicating their uses of language” (103). Rather than the mystifying term *community*, Harris proposes that we use terms we already have, such as *discourse* (107), and use a vision of the city, which “allows for both consensus and conflict” (106). The city metaphor helps further: rather than asking students to master a certain discourse, Harris asks us to encourage students “toward a kind of polyphony — an awareness of and pleasure in the various competing discourses that make up their own” (104). Using discourse instead of community also allows for an understanding that public and counterpublic discourse is addressed to strangers (Warner 55). When reading and composing public texts in the composition classroom, whether they be zines, blogs, e-zines, newspapers, videocasts, podcasts, etc., students should not be asked about the community involved, but rather the use of discourse to create publics, and to “*reposition* themselves in relation to several continuous and conflicting discourses” (Harris 105, citing Min-zhan Lu, emphasis original).

When attempting to recreate exigencies in the classroom for which students can respond, it seems that rather than focus on only one discourse — academic writing — that we should turn our attention to various discourses. Peter Elbow too has argued that students should try their hand at various discourses and write to different audiences (“Reflections” 255). While I do not mean to dismiss academic writing, or reinforce a false dichotomy between traditional academic writing and other nonschool literate practices (Courage 485), I do believe that when engaging in public writing and responding to exigencies, that traditional academic writing shouldn’t be composition studies’ primary goal. Michelle Comstock notes that many of the women who published grrl zines were university educated but chose to turn to zine culture to discuss issues of rape, suicide, abuse, and self-mutilation (390). Quite a few zinesters are university educated (though certainly many are not); for example, *Fag Rag* co-founder Ron Schreiber was a tenured professor at the University of Massachusetts, Boston (Stone 9). We might wonder why so many who have access to one type of public discourse (academic writing) choose instead to turn to another type (zines). Comstock discusses how the female body has been marginalized by dominant academic culture and how teachers are uncomfortable with dealing with violence against the female body in personal essays. She quotes Michelle Payne, who tells us that this kind of personal writing "challenges our purposes, our roles, and our power as teachers.... Subjects such as abuse, suicide, death, and divorce are perceived as more closely connected to a private, more vulnerable sense of self, a self that some believe does not belong in a writing class" (Comstock 390, qting. Payne).

Blogs, I believe, can help students to negotiate competing discourses, especially when they must consider the various publics and counterpublics they are addressing. If we ask students to read blogs and discuss the various ways they constitute publics, address an audience, and negotiate various discourses, as well as compose blog posts that engage in various, competing discourses, they may develop stronger agency in rhetorical situations and public composition. This is especially true, I believe, if students read blogs that constitute counterpublics — which are marked by idioms, the needs and interests of their members, and an oppositional stance to dominant culture (Warner 86) — and in turn analyze, discuss, and respond to these counterpublics. Because of the tensions often found in counterpublic discourse, reading and composing for counterpublicity means asking students to also interrogate the ways in which they read and respond to these texts, and also to question aspects of the private/public dichotomy.

The Tensions between the Private and Public in the Classroom

Tensions between the private and public are already strong in the classroom, with questions of how personal student texts should be. As I quoted above, Michelle Payne has expressed the general discomfort many writing teachers have with content that feels too private. I believe that we as writing teachers need to interrogate the general discomfort we have with personal issues in students writing, such as suicide, abuse, and rape that "some believe does not belong in a writing class" (Payne, qtd. in Comstock 390). Interrogating this discomfort and coming to a place where we can help students understand the political aspects of such private issues is imperative in developing our students' abilities to use their understanding of these issues to develop agency in public, as well as to read and listen to texts that work with such complicated issues.

Typical discussions of blogs and other new media are alarmist and warn the blogger to be careful about what personal information they post online (see, for example, Rosser's *Inside Higher Ed* and Tribble's *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles). While these warnings are useful and necessary in order to protect privacy and one's interests (getting a job, for example), few accounts seem to explore how online rhetors have successfully negotiated issues of privacy and publicity online. The necessity of having discussions with students about protecting their privacy is almost obvious (especially in regards to recent identity theft, cases of stalking and physical threats against women bloggers, and federal mandates such as the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA]), but how to discuss the use of private or personal material effectively online is less obvious. In a class focusing on public writing, though, it seems most useful to start with a discussion of what *public* and *private*, as well as the terms *personal* and *political*, mean — and extending that discussion to an understanding of the shifting, indexical nature of the concepts. In “Redefining Public/Private Boundaries in the Composition Classroom,” Andrea Stover stresses the dangers of enforcing the teacher’s definitions of private and public on students. She writes:

> Conflict and confusion [between various definitions of private and public] arise for five central reasons: (1) Anyone’s boundary of privacy is susceptible to change with context or over time; (2) a person’s intellectual and affective understandings of privacy may be at odds with one another; (3) a teacher’s concept of ‘private life’ and its role in the public classroom may clash with a student’s concept; (4) teachers have more power than students, and therefore exert more control over the public/private boundaries established in class; and (5) private boundaries are invisible, flexible, often indeterminate, yet vulnerable, and so it is difficult to trace the consequences of their violation. (7)

Stover raises the important issue of dialogue in order to negotiate these conflicts, stressing that “we must make our own understandings of public and private boundaries explicit to our students (even if we suspect they are misperceptions), and we must invite our students to make their understandings explicit to us” (8-9).

Dialogue in the classroom cannot stop at simply how we and our students define and value privacy and publicity, but must extend to how we read and compose texts. Reading texts, such as blogs, zines, magazine articles, documentaries, and podcasts that effectively and ineffectively negotiate the creators’ privacy and publicity, can lead to discussions about how students, when composing, can write about their lives (as needed or desired) in ways that are effective and safe. In addition, asking students to reflect on how they read and respond to texts, to “critique those responses, so as to have the power to *re*read” is important in helping students understand issues or privacy and publicity, especially in regards to the interrelations of power, privilege, discourse, and identities (A.

Lee 17). Narrative is perhaps the strongest mode to help understand the ways in which private issues become public or political issues. Both zines and blogs often "*personalize politics*" (Duncombe 28), showing the personal import of various political problems. Iris Marion Young claims that narrative is an important aspect of inclusive public discourse. "Political narrative," she writes, "differs from other forms of narrative by its intent and its audience context. I tell the story not primarily to entertain or reveal myself, but to make a point — to demonstrate, describe, explain, or justify something to others in an ongoing political discussion" (*Inclusion* 72). Amy Lee, in "Embodied Processes," discusses her students' responses to their classmate Maria's essay on being raped and subsequently silenced and shamed by her mother. Some students felt the essay was powerful, but others (especially males) felt the essay was "too personal" and preferred a classmate's essay on escaping Vietnam to come to America. Lee shares her experience in this class of asking students why one personal story is more valid as public writing than another, eventually asking "the class whether there were something powerful about choosing to tell a roomful of strangers a secret that even your own mother had used against you and that society in general cannot adequately respond to" (11-12). What Lee's narrative of teaching suggests is a certain "challenge":

> How, in making writing public, can we enable critical, self-reflexive reading so that texts, and positions, are not dismissed or silenced out of hand, but engaged. How can we use the occasion of making students' writing public in order to teach alternative or reflective/critical reading habits to our students? (14)

Exploring the fractal nature of the private/public dichotomy, especially in relation to public texts students are reading, is necessary, I believe, in exploring the ways in which readers respond to texts and interrogating structures of power and privilege that go with those readings.

Editorship, Design, and Multimodality

The polyphonic, multigenre, multimodal palimpsest makeup of blogs calls into question the techniques of composition we ask students to perform. David Bartholomae proposes that students should learn "the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (623), but I wonder, following Geoffrey Sirc, if we shouldn't "supercede" (or, if not supercede, at least amend) those techniques with new ones: "appropriating, sampling, copying, cataloguing, scanning, indexing, chatting, and audio/video-streaming" (19). Gunther Kress calls for a pedagogy of design which understands that genres are not stable, and that mixed genres are not mixtures of stable genres, but rather that "speakers and writers newly make the generic forms out of available resources" ("Multimodality" 53). Asking students to write for the electronic public sphere invites a composition of design, especially of mixed genres and voices. Michael Spooner and Kathleen Blake Yancey, writing as "Myka Vielstimmig" in their essay "Petals on a Wet Black Bough: Textuality, Collaboration, and the New Essay," note that there seems to be some connection between online writing and collaboration, especially in regards to experimentation in writing. Work online seems to be "a place of interaction. The texts usually have multiple authors, they're hyperlinked to other sites, they invite readers to contribute, and so on. Their tacit theory seems to be that the ethos of the net is a 'collaborative' one, broadly understood" (91). However, as Spooner and Yancey note, there is resistance to the idea of collaboration when it comes to invention: While many Americans are not opposed to group solidarity (think fraternities or jazz ensembles), there is a "resistance to collaboration [that] seems linked to invention. The jazz quartet plays; it doesn't compose. We expect the self to compose. We want the grades we earn ourselves. If this is right, then the project would be to help co-authors see themselves-as-self" (97).

Spooner and Yancey raise the important question of how to help students to collaborate in a way that they identify as collaborators and co-authors. As blogs call into question traditional notions of authorship, I think they, and other online media, offer an opportunity to seek answers to this question. Beginning a course with individual blogs and discussing the ways in which authorship seems to be working differently (at least explicitly) on the Internet, I believe, is a way to start. Students may soon find that their compositions are not solely from the stance of the author-as-genius, but rather from the perspective of editor or host to a public space. This may be especially true as we ask students to engage in various modalities online, including the creation of podcasts or videos, the latter of which are almost always collaborative efforts. Additionally, the use of hyperlinks in student writing provides the possibility of interrogating notions of authorship and intellectual ownership, as well as reading habits and notions of citation. I say *possibility* here because, as Nicholas Burbules puts it in "Rhetorics of the Web: Hyperreading and Critical Literacy," "there is nothing about the form of such [hypertextual] materials that *insures* more perspicuous readings or new ways of organising information" (107, emphasis original). Just as there is nothing inherently liberatory about blogs or the Internet, it is also not inherent that merely by composing multimodal texts on blogs and using hyperlinks that students will begin to question authorship and turn to collaborative, more experimental composing.

The multimodality of new media raises questions about theories of semiotics and how we teach composition. As Gunther Kress writes in "'English' at the Crossroads: Rethinking Curricula of Communication in the Context of the Turn to the Visual":

> [T]heories of language will not explain the other semiotic modes, unless one assumes that in every significant way they resemble language; nor will theories of language explain and describe the *interrelations* between the different modes, language included, which are characteristically used in multimodal semiotic objects — "texts" — of the contemporary period. ("'English'" 82, emphasis original)

Kress proposes that we replace "theories of use that regard language as a stable (and largely autonomous) system of elements, categories, and rules of combination" (84) and theories of critique with a theory of *design*:

> Design takes for granted competence in the use of resources, but beyond that it requires the orchestration and remaking of these resources in the service of frameworks and models that express the maker's intentions in shaping the social and cultural environment. While critique looks at the present through the means of past production, design shapes the future through deliberate deployment of representational resources in the designer's interest. Design is the textual principle for periods characterized by intense and far-reaching change. (87)

For Kress, design offers a different position than critique: one towards the future instead of the past. A curriculum of design does not mean that critique is not included in the curriculum, but rather that critique becomes a part of design. The New London Group has proposed "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," arguing that our understanding of literacy needs to be expanded to multiple modes of discourse and an understanding of a variety of cultural and linguistic contexts (New London Group 9).

Conversations, Circulation, and Delivery

The circulation of public discourse such as blogs and zines calls in question our common notions of public discourse as an “unending conversation,” which is often invoked in composition, following Kenneth Burke:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. (110)

According to Warner, the conversation model privileges “a dyadic speaker-hearer or author-reader relation” and “[a]rgument and polemic”; the model ignores onlookers who are not parties to the argument but are addressed even in argumentation (63). This conversation model, often evoked as the Burkean Parlor in composition studies, domesticates the classroom, ignores onlookers of public texts, and ignores the complexity of production and delivery. While I can’t deny the usefulness of the metaphor — it has, in fact, been very useful in conceptualizing my own writing as “entering a conversation” and in helping my students understand their own writing as not existing in a vacuum, but of being in relation to other texts, ideas, and arguments — I don’t want to dismiss it with some kind of “lure of totalizing, oppositionalizing readings” (Lunsford and Ede 169). Additionally, the conversation metaphor is useful when it comes to citing sources and situating oneself in relation to others’ arguments and perspectives.

In emphasizing circulation, I align myself with John Trimbur and Kathleen Blake Yancey, who have stressed the importance of both the circulation of student writing and studying circulation. Trimbur, in “Composition and the Circulation of Writing,” critiques the prevalent practice in composition pedagogy of reducing the canon of delivery to mere submission of a paper, which separates writing education from modes of production and delivery and over-emphasizes the act of writing — "the creative moment of composing" — which becomes what writing means to students. Trimbur wants to problematize this "isolation of writing from the material conditions of production and delivery" (189). Drawing from the work of cultural studies and Karl Marx, Trimbur shows "that the epistemological and discursive status" of a text "depends on how it circulates and, in effect, how it is exchanged and capitalized" (204). Production and delivery are linked, Trimbur argues: "to understand and, potentially, to change the way knowledge circulates requires thinking about how the means of production are distributed in the first place" (212). Yancey too has noted that circulation and production are not discrete; she recalls the five canons of rhetoric and "note[s] that we have separated delivery and memory from invention, arrangement, and style in ways that are counterproductive" because in actuality "they are interrelated" ("Made" 316).

Trimbur and Yancey contribute to our understanding that perhaps "conversation" isn't the best metaphor for understanding the circulation of public discourse. This is because embedded in the circulation of knowledge is the way production of knowledge and delivery are tied into each other. Trimbur asks us to help students critique expertise, production, and circulation, through the writing of public texts such as newspaper articles that report findings of experimental science journal articles. By focusing on genre and the distribution and production of knowledge, students are able to see that not only do newspaper articles distribute scientific knowledge, but they also contribute to certain knowledge production about researchers, contributing to a representation of "the work of science as a heroic and agonistic struggle" (213). Yancey asks that students remediate their own texts, transferring ideas from handout to PowerPoint show to poster to traditional text, considering what constitutes “writing” and how genre and medium affect the production and circulation of ideas (“Made” 314). “Thinking in terms of circulation,” she writes, “enables students to understand the epistemology, the conventions, and the integrity of different fields and their genres” (313).

By reading and writing blogs, students, too, can be reflective on the ways in which knowledge and expertise is circulated and produced. Just as Trimbur notes how a newspaper article through its circulation contributes to the production of certain knowledge about science, blogs circulate not only their content but also other forces. It is not my goal to go into those here, but I might speculate that, as an example, though blogs are celebrated as democratizing journalism, they often contribute to the expertise of mainstream newspapers through their citation of these sources and re-circulation of their content. Also, by considering the circulation of their own writing — both inside and outside the class — students may be able develop rhetorical agency in regards to their own invention practices. They might consider, for example, how the medium they choose (say, a podcast, traditional essay, or video) affects the content they’ve decided to include, including the content of others they cite.

Conclusion

While previous work in understanding blogs as genealogical descendents of diaries is useful, this inquiry into the relation of zines as genealogical ancestors of blogs can help us develop a fuller understanding of blogs. This understanding, too, provokes pedagogical questions about various issues, including recreating exigencies in the classroom; the discourses in which we ask students to engage and negotiate; how to incorporate private issues in the classroom and public writing, as well as how to talk about these; the techniques of composing texts that we should be addressing in the classroom; how to teach for multimodality; and how to understand the circulation of texts students read as well as the ones they compose. In the preceding pages, I have drawn various pedagogical implications for the writing classroom based on a study of blogs as descendent from zines, including the necessity of reproducing exigencies in the classroom, asking students to write for a public audience and to enter various discourses, viewing authorship as more like editing and designing, and incorporating multimodality in the classroom.

Some of these implications exist in the context of large, sometimes contentious, controversies in composition (I think, for example, of the famous interchange between Bartholomae and Elbow over what and how students read and write), and I have not covered those controversies with full depth, as each of the implications I have drawn here could easily be the topic of a thesis in itself. While I see these implications as important to helping students developing rhetorical and political agency in digital public spaces, I also cannot make totalizing claims about pedagogy for first-year composition, and instead must make these claims conditional on location: what access the classroom has to digital hardware and what the mission of first-year composition is at a particular institution. In Chapter 4 I discuss some material classroom practices relevant to these implications (though I do not cover everything I propose in this chapter) that are possible for either a first-year or an advanced composition course. But first, I would like to turn our attention to a particular blog that may provide a model, both for composition and for public discourse, in the following interchapter.

Interchapter 3
Feministing, Performativity, and Public Intellectuals: A [Long] Blog Post, of Sorts

> Thinking in terms of public rather than communal life can give us a way of describing the sort of talk that takes place *across* borders and constituencies. It suggests that we speak as public intellectuals when we talk with strangers rather than with the members of our communities and disciplines. (Joseph Harris, *A Teaching Subject* 109, emphasis original)

Through my discussion of blogs as descendent from zines in the last chapter, I showed that blogs can be understood as multimodal, multigenre public writing that engages in counterpublicity and questions traditional notions of authorship and the public/private dichotomy. I would like to turn attention to a specific blog — *Feministing* (Valenti et al., http://feministing.com) — in order to explore potentials for blogs and public discourse. I don't intend this to be an extended, in-depth exploration, but instead a start in exploring some of the ideas I discussed in the last chapter, as well as a discussion of a potential model for public discourse and possible models for composition — especially in regards to composition scholars' roles as public intellectuals.

Feministing is a co-edited feminist blog that discusses a variety of issues as they relate to women, including sexual reproduction, representations of women in mass media, women's health, body image, and sexual violence, among others. The editors write on their "about us" page: "Young women are rarely given the opportunity to speak on their own behalf on issues that affect their lives and futures. Feministing provides a platform for us to comment, analyze and influence" (Valenti et al., "about us"). *Feministing* is organized by a collective of feminist-identified women and includes posts by these women as well as other guest contributors. Posts on the blog are stamped with the first name of the poster (or, in some cases of guest contributors, a pseudonym) and remediate a variety of genres and modes: rants, videos, rhetorical analyses, editorials, filter entries, announcements, and more. Most posts on *Feminsisting* are primarily verbal text, roughly half of these posts include an image along with the text, and a few posts are embedded videos created by others but available through YouTube or another service.

The main page of *Feministing* might not appear to challenge traditional notions of authorship, as I claimed blogs do in the last chapter. Each post clearly has an "author" whose first name appears at the bottom of the post. However, once a reader clicks on the post, the discussion below the post begins to take on a life of its own, and while it may begin with the original post, commenters are more often responding to each other, and the comment thread is also often much longer than the corresponding post. While the collaborative work on these posts could be read, in the words of Andrea Lunsford et al., "as simply an aggregate of radically individual autonomous selves" (block 3), I think it is more productive to read them as Lunsford et al. suggest in "What Matters Who Writes? What Matters Who Responds?":

> Indeed, in cyberspace, reader/responder and author/writer often merge, voices collapse and multiply, often belonging to no single source — or even to a person, and familiar notions of textuality and especially of where meaning resides are all called into question. In many ways, the traditional labels of "reader," "writer," and "text" don't even name useful distinctions anymore. In a long and fascinating essay in the current [1995] issue of *Wired*, for example, Esther Dyson argues that value will no longer reside in content (text) or in the producer of the content (author) or even in the user of the content (reader) — but in the relationships surrounding and nurturing the movement of content through networks of users and producers. (block 4)

This is, for Lunsford et al., "the ultimate triumph of process over product," (block 5); as I discussed in the last chapter, blogs are indeterminate — rather then a stable text, they are constantly changing and involve a variety of new voices that continually change the meaning of the text.

For example, where does the meaning lie in the 31 July 2007 *Feministing* post "Best letter to the editor I have ever seen"? In this post, Samhita Mukhopadhyay quotes from and briefly comments on a letter to the editor from the *San Francisco Chronicle* that analyzes an image with a globe superimposed on a woman's pregnant belly. Does the meaning of this post lie in the words of the Mukhopadhyay, in the quoted letter, in the thirty comments from readers? It seems more so that Lunsford et al. are right — that voices are in relation to each other in cyberspace to such a degree that the boundaries between reader, writer, and text break down.

I find this particularly interesting in comparison to other public texts whose readership constitute a counterpublic. Editors of zines, magazines, and newsletters often include letters from readers, but they often limited to only a few an issue and might comment on content in a previous issue. On *Feministing*, however, commenting is more immediate, open to more people, and affects the content in a much more radical way. We could be concerned that the counterpublic (I could say "readership" if it didn't seem so antiquated) of *Feministing* are a homogenous group of feminists, but within the comments to this single post are a variety of different perspectives with disagreement over the meaning of the image analyzed in the original *Chronicle* letter to the editor, the nature of women's role in overpopulation, and how to fix overpopulation. Because it is public, *Feministing* also attracts readers who do not identify as feminist and who sometimes comment with alternative views as well. Additionally, Mukhopadhyay may carry more authority than others in this discussion (she has developed an ethos through being an editor of *Feministing* and perhaps through her advanced degree work at San Francisco State), but there doesn't seem to be any more reverence for her than for any other commenter on the blog post. My reading of this blog tends toward, to quote from Lunsford et al. again, "not knowledge products but the process through which knowledge is used; not the radical individual but the self-in-relation; not rights but responsibilities; not ownership but what Susan West calls 'owning up'" (block 16).

As I speculated in the last chapter, it might be better to conceive of bloggers as *hosts* or *editors* of public forums rather than *authors*. Additionally, there is a networked aspect of authorship; as I quoted Michelle Comstock in the last chapter in regards to zines: creating a zine "is less an act of authorship in the conventional sense than an act of critical editorship"; the authorship of grrrl zines is more a "networked authorship" with "methods of critical pastiche," and a "[resistance of] mainstream and academic notions of authorship as ownership," (394-395). Through selection and citation, a blogger gains "renown," resulting in "the final 'pay-off': membership in the network" (396). The blogrolls on *Feministing* and other blogs engaged in subaltern politics reveals participation in networks; *Feministing*, for example, links to a long list of blogs that discuss issues of race, gender, and sexuality from subaltern positions. An example of this "networked authorship" is seen in the blog *Salty Femme* (http://saltyfemme.com), which began in May 2006 and has since entered feminist and queer blogging networks through her citing and commentary and involvement in other blogs. I first began reading *Salty Femme* a few months after the blog started when a mutual friend of Salty Femme (she blogs under a pseudonym) and mine directed me to the blog (I now have developed a friendship with Salty). At the time, Salty Femme was posting solely to her blog, but has since began guest contributing to *Feministing* and other feminist and queer blogs after a year of intelligent discussion on her blog. *Salty Femme* is now included on various blogrolls she wasn't on a year ago, and includes these blogs in her blogroll. It seems that we can no longer understand writing in digital spaces without also understanding its networked, collaged, citation/editorial aspects.

As Lunsford et al. note, writing in cyberspace opens up questions of ownership of intellectual work for reasons mentioned above. The intertextual practices of bloggers such as the editors of *Feministing* call into question ownership through their collaging practices. Just like zinesters, bloggers seem to heed little attention to copyright and fair use laws, willfully quoting at length from newspaper articles, posting images from other sites without permission, or posting videos hosted on YouTube that are in direct violation of copyright laws. For bloggers, it seems less a matter of who "owns" content than what one does with it. In one case on *Feministing*, a Hillary for President campaign poster is included in a post in order to praise it for its parodic take on the media's obsession with Hillary Clinton's appearance ("Hillary and cleavage and hair, oh my!", 30 July 2007).

While *Feministing*'s content is more text-based (that is, written words), other blogs make more heavy use of multiple modes of discourse. The idea of a more diverse multimodal public sphere has been theorized by Michael Gardiner and Ken Hirschkop, who amend the work of Habermas by drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin and "his notion of 'the carnivalesque' — the idea that spaces and times exist in society in which power relations can be inverted through popular, 'earthly,' 'grotesque' and wildly funny culture" (Roberts and Crossley 19). Bakhtin offers a counter to Habermas's stress on transparency and reason; in "Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums," Gardiner writes, "Bakhtin's position can be summarized as follows: in contradiction to Habermas' ideal speech, we cannot have a clear, unmediated understanding of either our own or others' intentions whilst engaging in communicative acts" (36). He continues:

> Habermas wants no "hidden agendas" in dialogue, but the relatively powerless would be at a considerable disadvantage if they accepted without reservation the kind of transparency he thinks is necessary for legitimate dialogical outcomes. In situations of ingrained asymmetries of power, whether relatively informal or more highly structured and institutionalized, the dispossessed often need such agendas, to rely on what Michel de Certeau (1984) calls the "weapons of the weak." (37)

Hirschkop, also drawing from Bakhtin in "Justice and Drama: On Bakhtin as a Complement to Habermas," adds that the proper places to look for model public discourse is the theater, not the podium (54):

> Public discourse can't help being dramatic and vibrant, according to this [Bakhtin's] theory, because discourse acquires vibrancy in exact proportion to its public, social quality. [...] For what made language public was not the topics it covered or the places in which it circulated, but the *style* of it. (53, emphasis original)

It seems to me that the role of the compositionist as a public intellectual should be to look for these vibrant public performances and to help foster situations for vibrant public debate. I follow Christian Weisser, who, in *Moving Beyond Academic Discourse*, drawing on the work of Nancy Fraser and her concepts of counterpublics (see Chapter 2), wishes to move beyond traditional ways of thinking of public intellectuals. He writes that, contrary to a traditional concept, "[i]ntellectuals can take part in creating such counterpublics, and must also look for alternative sites in which to voice their opinions on social and political issues" (123). Intellectuals can promote and affect change "on the micro level of interaction," in their classroom, through scholarship, and through public actions, and need not be an expert on all subjects, but should be able to "speak to *any* group outside of the academy" (123, 125).

Weisser believes that if we view the role of the public intellectual in this way, we might "see a variety of opportunities for work," of which "[o]ur work in the classroom ... might be seen as perhaps the most important and effective avenue of political and social change that is available to us" (127). Weisser sees the work of compositionists as necessarily public: it is our role to be scholars of public discourse and to help to foster links amongst different discourse communities (129). "We need," he concludes,

> as Ellen Cushman notes in *The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change*, "a deeper consideration of the civic purpose of our *positions* in the academy, of what we do with our knowledge, for whom, and by what means." Activist intellectuals might be then, quite simply, members of academe who take steps to bring more voices, more discourse, and a greater degree of communication to public debates, and in turn bring about social change. (131)

Critical theorist Herbert Marcuse has also written about this role of the public intellectual, noting that she "has a decisive preparatory function" for public debate. He writes, "education today is more than discussion, more than teaching and learning and writing. Unless and until it goes beyond the classroom, until and unless it goes beyond the college, the school, the university, it will remain powerless" ("Liberation" 285). If the work of an intellectual spreads to outside of schools, there is the need to help develop public spheres where others can speak and talk. The intellectual's role (at least in the humanities), as I see it, then, is to not only offer counterdiscourse, but to help foster public arenas where others can speak — not to organize others, but to help foster democratic public spheres.

My focus in this thesis on blogs comes from a belief that not only does the blogosphere, and the Internet in general, provide potential for more democratic discourse, but also that it is the role of composition scholars to foster democratic public spheres. Matthew Barton, believing in the potential of the Internet for such discourse, notes that "[it] is losing its democratizing features and is becoming everyday more like our newspapers and television, controlled from above by powerful multinational corporations, who demand passivity from an audience of total consumers" (177). This means, as I see it, looking for models of public spheres and composition in the lifeworld (to return to Habermas's concept) of the Internet — those spaces in which rich discourse is being held and resistance (technological, political, and cultural) is fostered. I asked in the end of Chapter 2, how does our changing understanding of public discourse in a digital age affect the type of writing we value in the classroom? Viewing the blogosphere as a city allows us to turn to the city for a model of what this resistance might look like: street theatre, neighborhood activism groups, radical drag troupes, political graffiti, public forums on race and racism, local punk and hip hop shows, talk in coffee shops about local politics, zines, poetry slams, concerts, rap and drum circles performed on the streets, etc. These, as I see them, are sites of discourse organized by citizens rather than the state or market — sites, I believe, open to the urban ambulant whose movement, as I discussed in the previous interchapter, resists structured forces of the city. For blogs, there is a variety of types of discourse involved, including rants, essays, notes, podcasts, videos, poems, pictures, comics, and more — selected, cited, collaged, appropriated, sampled, created, and posted. If we are to value inclusive public discourse, especially that from the lifeworld of the city — that discourse not planned for by the administrators of the city — what types of writing are we to value in the composition classroom?

Like Carolyn Matalene and Marilyn Cooper and Cynthia Selfe, I share skepticism in claims that we must teach solely traditional academic writing (Matalene 181; Cooper and Selfe 849). Cooper and Selfe write:

> [O]ur efforts to instill in our students the specific conventions and values associated with academic discourse may well be designed more to legitimate our own work and our status in the larger society than to teach our students knowledge and skills that will enable them to function as productive members of society. (849)

Composition has made recent turns to understanding writing as more than printed text on the page. In "Toward Delivering New Definitions of Writing," Marvin Diogenes and Andrea Lunsford note the works of Mary E. Hocks, Gail Hawisher, Paul LeBlanc, Charles Moran, Cynthia Selfe, and Jim Porter, and the journal *Computers and Writing* have contributed to "a revised definition of writing" (144). Drawing from Walter Ong's conception of secondary orality, Diogenes and Lunsford claim "a necessary corollary may well be secondary *literacy*, that is to say, a form of communication that still looks a lot like traditional print literacy but that is deeply infected by other media, including spoken words and sounds, video, and images of all kinds" (142). Secondary literacy means "shift[ing] focus from a regularized writing that could easily be assessed to writing that is increasingly performed and performative" (143). If we understand the writing in the public sphere as multimodal, and we're more interested in the lifeworld of the public, where public discourse is more likely to be oppositional to dominant narratives and less likely to be controlled by the market and state, where do we look for models of composition, particularly on the Internet, as I am interested here?

With over 83.5 million blogs (and 175,000 new ones every day; "About Us"), I cannot pretend to claim that all blogs necessarily function as part of the lifeworld of the Internet, especially considering the number of blogs hosted by corporations and meant for advertising. However, some blogs, like *Feministing* (though it, too, is not free from market constraints, as it has corporate advertising), might provide models. And when considering our roles as public intellectuals — to foster sites of public discourse, both in the classroom and outside the university — we need to be open to a variety of modes of discourse in these public spheres. Additionally, to return to my discussion of James Bohman in Chapter 2, a necessity of a democratic public sphere is metadiscourse — discourse about the ways in which we communicate (136). This is not necessarily anything new to composition — we have already been holding metadiscourse about ways of reading and writing through classroom discussion and written reflection and teacher response — but it seems to me that not only do we need to hold metadiscourse in the classroom, but also teach students how to engage in it outside of the classroom — not solely for their own reading and writing activities, but also for how they interact with other readers and writers in public spaces.

If then, we are to look for models of composition of public spaces from the blogosphere, what blogs do we look for as models? This necessarily involves privileging certain discourses over others — this is perhaps unavoidable — and also raises questions about whether the "artificial" nature of the classroom can actually tap into self-sponsored literacies without pacifying them to some degree. Additionally, we can't ignore the institutional mission given to first-year composition at many universities, as well as the constraints on technology access. However, in those courses that can access technology and have more freedom with writing instruction, I think looking at blogs such as *Feministing* may provide us with potential models for composing and public discourse, especially in regards to “reader” interaction on the blog, challenges to traditional notions of authorship, and multimodality.

Chapter 4
Conclusion

> Curriculum is a design for the future. (Gunther Kress, "Visual and Verbal" 78)
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> To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality, and the best way of knowing and communicating it. (James Berlin, "Contemporary Composition" 256)
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> "[S]uppose, to paraphrase Elizabeth Daley, that we designed a curriculum in composition that prepared students to become members of the writing public and to negotiate life. How might that alter what we think and what we do?" (Kathleen Blake Yancey, "Made Not Only in Words" 306).

As I write this conclusion, I am sitting in an Internet café in northwest Portland named Backspace. I compose on my 2006 G4 iBook, which I pulled out of storage as my thesis due date drew near. I had been writing on my newer, sleeker, faster 2007 MacBook, but, when I was at a frustrating point in my writing process, I found the ease of its Internet connectivity too distracting; at any moment, I could open up my instant messenger client, check my email, or return to my Internet browser to read some recent blog posts — or write some of my own. To mitigate this distraction, I had returned to my iBook (which had gone unused for eight months because its screen had begun to darken and flicker), created a new user account that didn't have access to the Internet, and asked a friend to change the passwords on the admin accounts so that I couldn't just switch accounts to get online. Today I am spending five hours at Backspace, drinking coffee, listening to my iPod (most often the Clash: "What are they saying in the public bazaar?" ["Inoculated City"]), and writing, leaving my seat only to use the bathroom, smoke a cigarette, pay the parking meter, or buy another drink. I pull out my MacBook only when I need the Internet for research (e.g., who are the editors of *Feministing*?), and otherwise, it sits in my messenger bag, as if I were putting the Internet aside and pulling it out only when needed, like a reference book.

I tell this story not because I necessarily want to reveal my Internet addiction or my struggles with writing this thesis, but because it seems important to stress the ways in which technologies change the ways we compose. In *Writing New Media*, Anne Wysocki argues that materiality matters in the production of texts (Wysocki et al. 7), and Jim Porter makes this point as well in "Why Technology Matters to Writing: A Cyberwriter's Tale," where he critiques the humanist perspective that humans and technologies are separate and argues that instead we need to understand *the use* of technologies in their "social and ideological context[s]" (384). According to Porter, humanists tend to have a utopian, dystopian, or dismissive (e.g., technology doesn't change writing) view toward technology, but, following the work of feminist, posthumanist theorists Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway, Porter argues that technology is a part of us, which allow us to seek answers to questions "the humanist approach fails to answer": "How will we use technology? How will we design technology? How will we engage technology?" (387-388).

My use of technology has changed my writing process and products even over the last few years. I have already provided the example of the distractibility of the Internet above, but other examples, positive and negative, abound. Laptops have allowed other graduate students and me to sit in the same coffee shop and write, which has made the writing process more social and less isolating. Online collaboration tools such have Google Docs have changed the way I collaborate in writing (especially when I compare my third grade collaborative fiction attempt, handwritten with a friend on the school bus, and my use of Google Docs with colleagues for course papers, conference talks, and other documents). Collaboration has changed in other ways as well, including collaborating with strangers through changes in Wikipedia articles or in dialogue on a blog's discussion thread. Through blogging, I have been able to meet more people — whether online or eventually in person — and engage in quality discussions with them in cyperspace; this is largely due to linking to others' blogs and other texts. That all these changes in my writing are markedly social is worth noting (Robert Yagelski argues in *Literacy Matters* that literate activities are necessarily social): In a YouTube video titled "Web 2.0 … The Machine is Us/ing Us," Kansas State cultural anthropologist Michael Wesch presents a carnival of moving and changing text. At one point in the video, the sentence "Digital text is no longer just linking information…" is changed to "Web 2.0 is linking people… people sharing, trading, and collaborating…" (Wesch).

My argument in Chapter 2 — that it would be productive to view the blogosphere as an ideal city — is, as I see it, an answer to Porter's questions about use, design, and engagement. Of course, I am cautious with this metaphor: It is not meant as a band-aid that merely through thinking about will change the blogosphere into an ideal, vibrant public sphere. Rather, it creates a vision that can guide our use, design, and engagement. In the second interchapter to this thesis, I described the engagement of the walker in the city — able to move free of the constraints of the city planners. How we view and design the Internet relates to our use and engagement: the blogosphere as a museum or filter limits our mobility to consumption; the blogosphere as a series of communities doesn't allow for an understanding of moving among communities or imagining "a site where people negotiate across differences rather than through them" (Weisser 52). The city provides a model for travel on the Internet; our routes, where we linger, where we pass up, where we contribute, are not necessarily controlled by city administrators.

Because the Internet is a public place, it is necessary to understand blogs as public texts. Research on blogs in rhetoric and composition is nascent, and most work in understanding the blog as a genre has focused on the diary as its genealogical ancestor. While this approach isn't wrong, it ignores the public audience of the blog, as well as the indeterminate, ever-changing aspect of many blogs through "reader" participation. I showed in Chapter 3 that it was more productive to view blogs as genealogically descendent from zines — independently produced magazines that are amateur in nature. Zines, with their circulation, amateur publication, multimodal design, and challenges to traditional notions of authorship, provide a model for understanding how blogs function. Additionally, I proposed in Chapter 3 that this understanding of blogs leads to some pedagogical implications for the writing classroom: asking students to write for a public, trying to reproduce exigencies in the classroom, holding necessary conversations about what public and private mean, viewing the writer as a designer and editor rather than a traditional author, and discussing the interrelation of circulation and production with students.

In the last interchapter, I discussed the necessity of looking for and creating sites for rich public discourse. The feminist blog *Feministing* provides, I believe, a model for how blogs can function in ways that promote democratic discourse online, especially in ways that the traditional separations of "reader," "writer," and "text," begin to break down in digital media. Authorship is becoming, in some sites online at least, a matter of networking and editing and can't be limited to verbal-based texts, but is instead becoming multimodal.

In the following pages, I would like to draw from these conclusions and propose some classroom practices for the writing classroom. I don't — and can't, due to limitations in time and space — mean to cover every aspect of my analysis thus far in proposing pedagogical practices, but rather to discuss some ideas that can begin to address issues I've discussed above: a turn to public writing, online networking, collaboration, and multimodality. I do so with my prior failure to use blogs in the classroom in mind, understanding now the necessity that blogs circulate knowledge out from the classroom, are integrated into the curriculum and not merely supplemental to other content, and that students have investments in their blogs based in exigencies from their own lives. This chapter is organized into three sections: first, some proposed pedagogical practices; second, limitations of those practices; and lastly, some speculations and questions that I am continuing to ponder. In this last section, I discuss some questions related to affect, reading, and listening on blogs. Additionally, I discuss in length the binary between social epistemic and expressionist pedagogies, and speculate that pedagogical practices that incorporate new media may question this binary.

Proposed Practices

In conceptualizing a composition classroom that makes use of blogs for public discourse, I align myself with the work of Cynthia Selfe, Anne Wysocki, and Kathleen Blake Yancey, who have explored the pedagogical implications of using new media and developing student agency and literacies. For example, Yancey, in her address "Made Not Only In Words," asks, "how many compositions are in this text?" (300). She goes on:

> how does this text — with call outs, palimpsest notes, and images — cohere?
>
> And:
> How do we create such a text?
> How do we read it?
> How do we value it?
> Not least, how will we teach it? (301)

Related to this, Yancey asks us to "suppose, to paraphrase Elizabeth Daley, that we designed a curriculum in composition that prepared students to become members of the writing public and to negotiate life. How might that alter what we think and what we do?" (306). As I noted in Chapter 2, I also draw from Susan Wells's conceptualization of how compositionists can use public writing in the classroom. For an introductory course, such as first-year composition, this involves (1) viewing the classroom as a microcosm of the public, where students collaborate, discuss persuasion, audience, their positions, and acts of reading; (2) analyzing public discourse; and (3) produce writing that enters public circulation (338-339). My goal in describing some material practices is not to describe an entire course in detail, but rather to offer some ideas of what this course may look like with some proposals for practice. I am also hesitant to lay out practices that are separate from the material reality of specific classrooms, and I do not intend here to lay out a "set of requirements" for a composition classroom that incorporates blogs. It is important to note that classroom practices must be situated in the material reality of the educational institution, department, teacher, and students — including but not limited to the availability of computer labs, audio and visual composing technologies, and the mission and institutional placement of first year composition by the department and institution.

In the course I imagine, which situates public writing as the focus of study, students would be asked to start their own blogs in order to begin their own research and composing on a topic of their choosing. As Amy Lee does in her composition classroom, as described in "Embodied Processes: Pedagogies in Context," I would ask students to start early in the course thinking about an experience, issue, belief, or value they would like to research, explore, and write about for the term (12). As Lee notes, her goal wasn't to have students to write a personal narrative or any other specific rhetorical form, nor was it to ask students to be expressive; rather, she saw the first essay assignment

> as a way of enacting Gramsci's call for a 'self'-inventory. According to Gramsci, 'The beginning of the critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is,… as the product of the historical process which has left you an infinity of traces gathered together without the advantage of an inventory.' (12, ellipses Lee's)

I choose a similar approach to Lee's because I desire for students to develop their own topics of inquiry — to find exigencies in their own lives. I cannot pretend a utopian vision that this means students will automatically become more engaged in their projects, as I have seen students select topics in the past that were not very self-motivating.

A necessary start to the course would include introducing students to blogs and other Web 2.0 technologies, including RSS readers, Technorati.com (a search engine for blogs), and del.icio.us (a social bookmarking site) — all tools that can help students to connect with each other online outside of class and to connect with other Internet users. This introduction, as I see it, would include various readings, perhaps including Rebecca Blood's "Weblogs: A History and Perspective"; Jill Walker's "Final Version of Weblog

Definition"; new media scholar Clay Shirky's 2002 *Networks, Economics, and Culture* article "Weblogs and the Mass Amateurization of Publishing"; Bonnie Nardi et al.'s *Communications of the ACM* article "Why We Blog"; Anna Notaro's "The Lo(n)g Revolution: The Blogosphere as an Alternative Public Sphere?"; Clancy Ratliff's "Sites of Resistance"; and Common Craft's video "RSS in Plain English." These articles and video, all available online either as blog posts, on a periodical's website, or through a library database, provide a variety of perspectives on blogs: Blood's perspective on the history of blogs, Walker's definition, Shirky's and Ratliff's understandings of new modes of publishing, Notaro's analysis of the potentials of an online public sphere, and Nardi et al.'s study of why people blog.

After beginning to introduce students to these online tools and perspectives on blogs, students would create their own blogs with a focus on the topic that they have chosen. (This does not mean that their blogs are limited to their chosen topics, for most blogs often include off-topic posts that are also of interest to their editors and readers). Additionally, students would set up an RSS reader account and pull in the feeds of their classmates' blogs, as well as the instructor's blog (where assignments, messages, and links to readings and websites of interest could also be shared). Too, students would find other blogs that discussed similar themes on a regular basis. Since an important aspect of developing ethos with other bloggers is having blogging software similar to others who write on a similar topic, students might consider the software used by others before selecting their own software to use.

While I hope that through their engagement in the blogosphere, students would find their own exigencies to post more than the assignments given, I also understand that some, if not many, students would only post the minimum. I also understand that there is resistance from some educators to the ideas of assigning blogging, which to educators like Will Richardson make blogging artificial and takes away its self-motivated aspects (cited in Downes 24). However, as James Moffett has noted, artificiality cannot be completely avoided in the composition classroom (cited in Benson and Latchaw 87), and I believe that Richardson's privileging of blog posts as somehow "more geniune" than other genres and modes does not do justice to other forms that are also written outside of the classroom (including the traditional academic essay). However, I am also mindful of K-12 educator Clarence Fisher's insights on his blog *Remote Access*, where he writes that all too often teachers are co-opting youth literacies for their own traditional purposes. His words are worth quoting at length:

> First of all, we still don't get it. We are still trying to appropriate the literacy practices of youth culture, and co-opt them for our own means. We use hip - hop to teach grammar. We use blogs to nitpick the ultra fine points of novels and to teach grammar. We don't honour the literacy practices of the people in our classrooms for what they are. To many teachers, they are not legitimate on their own. It is OK to [use] blogs, as long as we are tearing apart their writing while we use them. We will teach them how to shoot video, but only for a "feel - good" unit, a reward if they work hard on the other stuff we want them to do. New literacy practices become the sugar which makes the medicine go down easier.
>
> Second, we still crave control. We are willing to give kids the experience of blogging, if they are responding to a list of prompts. We are willing to use video if the videos are a series of X number of shots, each lasting no longer then X number of seconds. We definitely do need to teach structure and use frameworks with kids; they need a frame and a form to hang their thinking on, but to me, it smacks of assignments not changing. Are we still doing old things in new ways? 5 paragraph essays in video form? (Fisher)

Fisher raises the important point that using new media doesn't matter much if we are not using new media in new ways. Asking students to blog just to complete assignments doesn't do much good if teachers are not considering the ways in which new media work differently from older media.

We might consider the ways in which new media function differently from older media through the popular rhetorical analysis assignment, which has been used traditionally as an academic paper in which students analyze a text for various aspects of the rhetorical situation and techniques of persuasion. This assignment is sometimes remediated for blogging assignments, as Charles Tyron does and describes in "Writing and Citizenship: Using Blogs to Teach First-Year Composition." Tyron's first assignment to his students was to write a blog post analyzing the rhetoric of another blog. What is interesting about online media though, is the ability of the analyzed to engage in the conversation. When those bloggers who were linked to and analyzed realized it (by checking their referent lists), they began to comment on the posts that analyzed them. One blogger, Rachel Lucas, responded by leaving a comment on a student's post: "How do I make my arguments? Why, by calling people 'asshats,' of course. Actually, I have no idea how I make my arguments except that I try to stick to the facts and I always admit when I'm wrong, which fosters credibility in all future arguments, I think" (qtd. in Tyron 129). The experience of having research subjects respond to the research reveals the interactive, networked nature of online writing. If we as teachers are not cognizant of the ways in which new media act differently from prior media, then it is of little use to ask students to use new media in the classroom.

The rhetorical analysis post is certainly a helpful tool so that students can think critically about the rhetorical situation and means of persuasion used by not only the subject of their analysis, but also themselves. But asking students to perform a rhetorical analysis in an essay that requires them to pay attention to key terms, such as *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, *audience*, *purpose*, *claims*, *warrants*, etc., has led, in my experience, to essays that were more like check lists and to questions from students sounding like "I have the essay's *logos* in my paper, but I can't figure out its *pathos*" — as if the analysis were a fill-in-the-blank or Where's Waldo puzzle. I'm not saying these terms shouldn't be used, but asking a student to perform an analysis perhaps more as a review could have more applicability to our students' lives. Instead of the traditional analysis paper, which almost always connotes a "right answer" that the teacher is looking for, a review/analysis post of another blog actually does things in the world: directs readers toward an interesting blog or away from a boring, banal, poorly edited or designed, xenophobic, or sexist (or insert another adjective) blog. I am not arguing that students shouldn't be knowledgeable of and able to use terms such as *pathos* and *logos* — but rather that it makes more sense for them to be able to direct their own attention and others' attention to interesting and relevant material when using analytical skills. This turn to the social, I believe, helps to mitigate Fisher's concerns that we are using new media in old ways. Assigning a traditional rhetorical analysis to post on a blog is barely different from having it written on paper, except that it taps into a "cool" new medium; instead, we could ask for a different type of analysis that taps into the social aspect of new media.

An important starting assignment, before an analysis of another blog, is the introductory post. As Joseph Harris argues, it is important for students to be able to navigate various discourses, and to understand that they are members of various discourses (105). The introductory post — when students understand that their goal is to eventually reach an audience of the teacher, their classmates, and hopefully other bloggers and readers of blogs who are interested in their topics — becomes an immediate rhetorical situation in which students must negotiate their various subject positions and potential audiences. In my experience as a teacher, students' introductory blog posts have been short and often not very forthcoming with information. This stands in stark contrast to the much lengthier letters I have asked students to write me in other classes. This reticence to posting longer introductory posts, I feel, grew out of the causes for the class blog's failure that I discussed in Chapter 1. I believe, with blogging more centrally located in the course's curriculum (as a form of public writing) and with students owning their own blogs, that the depth of introductory posts may be increased. Instead of solely introducing themselves to the class and to the teacher, as they did when I first tried using blogs, students may see their first post as introducing their blogs to a possible public audience.

It may be helpful for students to read a diverse group of introductory posts to blogs. For example, *Feministing*, the blog I discussed in the last interchapter, began on 12 April, 2004, with the post "Feministing launches!", which discusses, among other things, the blog's purpose:

> Too often, young women's voices aren't heard, whether it's in school, in the media, or at the dinner table. But most importantly, our input is absent where it matters most: on issues that affect us directly…. Feministing will be an interactive space for young women to stay on top of the news and issues that affect us, and to exchange thoughts and ideas with each other. (Valenti et al., "Feministing launches!")

Looking at a wide variety of models may foster a discussion about what introductory posts say about a blog, as well as how they introduce the blogger and the blog's purpose. In *The Mirror and the Veil: An Overview of American Online Diaries and Blogs*, Viviane

Serfaty notes that when diarists first begin journaling, they almost always emphasize that this is the beginning of their diary, and the same appears to be the same of online journaling, with the added component of reflexivity about the Internet (31). Bloggers often use their first blog post to reflect on the purpose of their blog, and it's possible that, if students have selected an issue, value, or experience they wish to reflect on for the term, that this first blog post may assist them in reflection on their purposes in choosing and inquiring about this topic.

Related to a blog's purpose, of course, is its audience, and an important aspect of a blog that finds an audience is being part of a network. Entering that network is often done through responding to others' writings and ideas. From here, I follow, in part, Ken Smith of Indiana University's suggestion on his blog:

> Instead of assigning students to go write, we should assign them to go read and then link to what interests them and write about why it does and what it means, not in order to make a connection or build social capital but because it is through quality linking... that one first comes in contact with the essential acts of blogging: close reading and interpretation. Blogging, at base, is writing down what you think when you read others. If you keep at it, others will eventually write down what they think when they read you, and you'll enter a new realm of blogging, a new realm of human connection. (Smith)

In the classroom I envision, students would find blogs that related to their topic of interest and begin to enter that network through responding to those blogs. Some topics may be relatively easy to discover content on the web, while others may take more digging. In his 2007 CCCC talk, Geoffrey Middlebrook of the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, discussed having his students engage in conversations online within communities of blogs within their academic discipline. He shared the example of two of his students, one in history and the other in economics, who engaged in strong discussions on their own blogs and were commenting heavily on "expert" blogs in their respective fields (Middlebrook). While Middlebrook's example is from an upper-division composition course, I believe similar outcomes are possible for an introductory composition course.

While my discussion above has focused on students' individual blogs, I would like to turn my attention to a course blog, which I see the class forming in a similar way that Jonathan Alexander describes his class's creation of an e-zine in his essay "Digital Spins: The Pedagogy and Politics of Student-Centered E-zines." Alexander asked students to turn to online publishing after he "became aware of how positively 'staged' or artificial most of my students' writing is, particularly with respect to audience — academic and otherwise" (387). He also realized that students seemed to also realize that course booklets and more static, traditional websites created in class also only reached a limited audience — the teacher and other students in the class — especially those websites that presented student work as student work (388, 399). After asking students to explore the audience expectations of various e-zines and compose and submit their own essay to an e-zine, Alexander asked students to create their own e-zine for the course. Alexander describes the rich discussion students had over the purpose and proposed content of their e-zine, as well as the audience they would like to reach. Much of this discussion was held over email, and Alexander shares his students' growing understanding of audience expectations, genre conventions, and rhetorical purposes. He writes, "although students had a strong desire for the content to be interesting, they were also gradually seeing that different discourse communities had different needs, different tolerances, and different understandings of what is 'cool'" (398). Students' investment in the title of their e-zine showed not only more engaged interest than Alexander had seen when discussing printed class booklets, but also stronger attention to purpose and audience (399).

I think a similar approach is possible with creating a course blog. In my experience, as I discussed in Chapter 1, students seem to feel little ownership over a course blog that is titled by the teacher and not integrated into the curriculum. After having experience with reading and composing on blogs, students may, by the middle of the term, have enough experience seeing collaborative blogs that have specific purposes and foci that have risen out of the bloggers' own lives. Asking students to generate a blog (or perhaps a few different blogs) with content that has import both for them and in the public sphere can be a challenging collaborative effort that takes negotiation among classmates around audience, content, and purpose. Hopefully, as it was for the classes Chris Benson's and Joan Latchaw describe in "Creating Rhetorical Exigencies," an exigence for the class blog can be found in the students' community. As I described in the last chapter, while their students did not write for blogs, Benson and Latchaw's writing classrooms were able to find exigencies from their local community; in Benson's case, the class wrote in response to a rape on campus, and in Latchaw's, students collaboratively composed a manual for his university's email system (89-95). A collaborative student blog would hopefully find its exigence and purpose in the lives of students and what they find important in their community.

While I do not intend to cover every aspect of the conclusions I made in the last chapter, I have thus far in this chapter neglected one aspect of the pedagogy I am proposing: multimodality. As I see it, it is important to address the how-to of creating texts in other modes, including video and audio, though these can be admittedly time-consuming. However, while also teaching students technical skills in how to produce content (though perhaps some students will come in with more skills than the teacher), teaching other modes of discourse also addresses what Kathleen Yancey has noted "students aren't asked to do in the current model" of composition:

- consider what the best medium and the best delivery for such a communication might be and then create and share those different communication pieces in those different media, to different audiences;
- think explicitly about what they might "transfer" from one medium to the next; what moves forward, what gets left out, what gets added — and what they have learned about composing in the transfer process;
- consider how to transfer what they have learned in one *site* and how that could or could not transfer to another, be that site on campus or off;
- think about how these practices help prepare them to become members of a writing public. ("Made" 311)

Although I consider my above discussion to still be nascent, I feel it begins to address some of the concerns I have been addressing throughout this thesis: the circulation of discourse beyond the classroom and into the public, attention to audience, reproducing exigencies that have import in students' lives, and multimodality. In concluding, I would like to turn to some limitations, as well speculations and questions that continue to intrigue me and I see as having importance in composition in relation to public discourse, blogs, and pedagogy.

Limitations

I have attempted throughout this thesis to resist a utopian or dystopian view of blogs and new media, and to resist the types of totalizing claims often made in scholarship about the way a classroom *should* be. The recommendations I have made need to be considered in relation to specific sites, and come with limitations — in other words, pedagogy is necessarily locational. In Chapter 1, I described the limitations that led to the failure of using blogs in my classroom. I have attempted to address some of these limitations, such as the fact that students in my classroom were not writing to an outside audience, in my discussion throughout this thesis; however, other limitations are still important to consider here. One is the location-specific mission and institutional placement of first-year composition and the expectations of the course by administrators, faculty, legislative bodies, students, and parents.

Another obvious limitation is time. As Paul Heilker notes:

> [T]here are simply too many things we want to accomplish" in first year composition: "to honor and do justice to rhetoric, poetic, *and* electronic; written, oral, digital, *and* multimodal composition; literary, popular, *and* technical discourse; personal, academic, *and* civic discourse; individual *and* collaborative composition; syntactic *and* paratactic organization; critical thinking, reading, writing, speaking, *and* listening. (206, emphasis original)

As it is for Yancey and others, Heilker's solution to this abundance of goals is an extended undergraduate program in composition, one that would allow an exploration of all these ideas (206-208). While I agree with this solution, my point here is to note that there are serious time constraints to the classroom and what can be enacted. This is especially true of courses that require online writing. While the apparent conflation of space and time online make it seem as though we have more time when we work online, we in fact do not. Reading and composing online can be very time consuming.

In addition to time is the availability of technology on a campus. While most colleges and universities have computer labs that are available to students who do not own their own, many institutions lack labs that are available for classes during class time.

The availability of computers during classtime, in my experience, has been vital in scaffolding computer use when it comes to modeling blogging, RSS feeds, and other online activities.

Additionally, we can also be concerned about the privilege it takes to create zines and blogs. The publishers of *Fag Rag*, for example were not without privilege: co-founder Ron Schreiber, for example, was a tenured professor at the University of Massachusetts, Boston (Stone 9). Duncombe notes that zinesters are typically white and

> children of professionals, culturally if not financially middle-class," though they have typically left behind some privilege and have "embarked on 'careers' of deviance that have moved them to the edge of society: embracing downwardly mobile career aspirations, unorthodox musical and literary tastes, transgressive ideas about sexuality, unorthodox artistic sensibilities, and a politics resolutely outside the status quo. (8)

JupiterResearch's recent study of time spent with certain media by affluent people (defined as those making more than $100,000 a year) and by non-affluent people found that affluent people were more likely to blog and to read blogs: "A full 26% of affluents read blogs and 11% are blog-authors. Among non-affluent people, those figures are 22% and 6%, respectively" (qtd. in vegankid). Of course, this privilege has informed my resistance to a utopian reading of the Internet as a public sphere.

Speculations and Questions

Blogs, I believe, give rise to an explicit opportunity to explore ways of composing other than what Gary Olson calls "rhetoric of assertion" that has so dominated composition courses (235), and open up composing to expression, understanding, and exploration. One of the biggest problems in our current public discourse (aside from its domination by the state and market), as I see it, is the insistence on posturing and assertion, rather than an exploration of values, ideas, beliefs, and commitments. Our models for public rhetoric are too often instances of assertion — only in the margins is there a rhetoric of exploration or a rhetoric of listening.

Additionally, we must be concerned with the devaluation of the fragment and the privileging of the longer composition. Saikat Majumdar, in her recent *College English* opinion piece "The Fetish of Fullness," critiques English studies' emphasis on the long monograph, particularly in regards to tenure and promotion. Majundar draws from Naomi Schor's *Reading in Detail*, in which Schor writes that the academic suspicion of the fragment has been recycled throughout time, but reached its culmination with Hegel and the "contempt Hegel flaunts for the 'little stories of everyday domestic existence' and 'the multiform particularities of everyday life' — in short, for all he lumps under the dismissing heading 'the prose of the world'" (qtd. in Majumdar 643). Since Marxism, which heavily influences literary theory, cultural studies, and many composition theorists, grows out of Hegelian historicism, it is not surprising that Marxism "has show little tolerance for what Walter Benjamin called 'the fragment'" (643). Marjumdar writes that those full-length texts which are organized by fragments aren't that different from other full-length studies "in range of thematic ambition," but are different in "treatment of the theme" and in "perceptions of fullness." But this "sense of fullness of treatment conveyed by the materiality of the book ... is more symbolic than real" (650).

In conversation, I have heard blogs denigrated as "fragmentary" and "not sustained." The very same "fetish of fullness" that Majumdar describes is transported to our perceptions of public discourse and to our classrooms, where we have grown to expect and value, to return to Olsen, the long

> essay, which has usually meant to take a position on a subject (often stated in a "strong," "clear" thesis statement, which is itself expressed in the form of an assertion), and to construct a piece of discourse that then "supports" the position. Passages in an essay that do not support the position are judged irrelevant, and the essay is evaluated accordingly. (235)

Blogs offer a fragmented document — ever changing, and oriented toward the present and future. The value placed on the extended argument of assertion has devalued the fragment, what expressionist Winston Weathers in his 1980 *An Alternative Style: Options in Composition* called a "crot," which seems to function oddly similarly to blog post. As part of Weather's Grammar B, *crot* is "an obsolete word meaning 'bit' or 'fragment'" that Weathers borrows from Tom Wolfe.

> It is fundamentally an autonomous unit, characterized by the absence of any transitional devices that might relate it to preceding or subsequent crots and, because of this independent and discrete nature of crots, they create a general effect of metastasis — using that terms from classical rhetoric to label, as Fritz Senn suggests in the *James Joyce Quarterly* (Summer, 1975), any "rapid transition from one point of view to another." In its most intense form, it is characterized by a certain abruptness in its termination[...]. (Weathers 14)

Diogenes and Lunsford note that perhaps the hypertextuality of online writing provides "an opportunity for some digitally enhanced and reimagined form of Grammar B to become the dominant grammar of mediated writing" (145).

Although I align myself with critical pedagogy, I think new media raise questions about the oppositions some critical pedagogues have posited between social-epistemic pedagogy and expressivionist pedagogy, such as that offered by Weathers and Elbow. In his famous 1988 essay "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," James Berlin critiques expressionist rhetoric, which he sees as

> based on a radical individualism. In the name of empowering the individual, however, its naivety about economic, social, and political arrangements can lead to the marginalizing of the individuals who would resist a dehumanizing society, rendering them ineffective through their isolation. (23)

While Berlin accepts that expressionist rhetoric is founded in resistance, it is, dangerously, "a resistance that is always construed in individual terms" (18). Expressionism's subversiveness is merely apparent, not real, Berlin argues, because there is no political protest outside of the individual, and the expressionist rhetoric is easily co-opted by capitalism, falling into the pit of entrepreneurialism: "individualism, private initiative, the confidence for risk taking, the right to be contentious with authority" (18). What I wonder about Berlin's (and others') critiques, though, is, following Lisa Ede, if these critiques privilege theory over practice, and, following Marshall Alcorn, if they don't ignore key issues of expression and desire, which, as I see it, are important in the creation of a communicative democracy.

In "Teach Writing," Ede cites the example of James Berlin's criticisms of Peter Elbow in *Rhetoric and Reality*, which, from an epistemological perspective, dismisses Elbow's theory and practice as subjective instead of epistemic, the pedagogy Berlin promotes. Ede points to Elbow's writing groups, which Berlin dismisses instead of incorporating into a "fully contextualized consideration of the actual classroom practices Elbow advocates" (128). It seems to Ede that "Berlin may create an opposition between subjective and social-epistemic rhetoric that exists more strongly in theory than in practice" (128).

Joseph Harris, in *A Teaching Subject*, notes that expressionists Peter Elbow and Ken Macrorie in their 1970s work "were aggressively and self-consciously political"

(26). Elbow, for instance, began his 1973 *Writing without Teachers*: “Many people are now trying to become less helpless, both personally and politically: trying to claim more control over their own lives. One of the ways people most lack control over their own lives is through lacking control over words” (vii). Robert Yagelski comments on this passage: “With this opening statement, Elbow implicitly defines writing as a political act in a way that is consistent with more recent conceptions of the personal as political (for example, as bell hooks conceives this connection)” (539). As Yagelski argues, some expressionist writers, such as Elbow and Murray, “are Freire's brethren” (533), in part because they focus (though do not articulate in detail) on a similar epistemology, one “in which knowledge is a function of reflection on one's own experience” (537). Yagelski argues that Paulo Freire's most important contribution is not his critique of pedagogical methods, but rather his ontological message (541). For Friere,

> Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming* — as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. Indeed, [...] people know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompletion. In this incompletion and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation. (Freire 84, emphasis original)

Yagelski writes, “For Freire, to be fully human is to be aware of this state of becoming and to participate in the ongoing construction of reality” (541). Because reality is not fixed, but is instead constructed through mutual meaning-making, humans are fundamentally imaginative. Donaldo Macedo writes in his introduction to the thirtieth anniversary edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* of “the immeasurable hope that Paulo represented for those of us who are committed to imagine a world, in his own words, that is less ugly, more beautiful, less discriminatory, more democratic, less dehumanizing, and more humane" (25). This imagination and ontological message from Freire informs the pedagogy of many expressionist and social-epistemic theorists — and is in line with the Habermasian ontology I described in Chapter 2 and align myself with: that we are relational beings building reality through communicative action.

In *Changing the Subject in English Class: Discourse and Constructions of Desire*, Marshall Alcorn notes that social-epistemic pedagogues, such as James Berlin, have missed the need for expression in discourse. He writes:

> Berlin valued the right political ideas over expressive writing. I argue that political ideas will never be right until there is attention to, and freedom in, self-expression. However, freedom is not, as most liberals assume, a simple, spontaneous act. It is, instead, a difficult discipline that requires the kind of struggle that all writers engage as they struggle to find their own conflicting thoughts and take responsibility for those thoughts on paper. (3)

Alcorn calls for a teaching that is both political and personal: "Because ideology operates at the level of personal and emotional experience, it needs to be explored at that level" (28). Without unnecessarily re-hashing all of Alcorn's book, he argues that expression, desire, and emotion must play a role in critical pedagogy in order to affect ideological change. What contributions such as Ede's, Yagelski's, and Alcorn's show is that the oppositions between expressionist and social-epistemic pedagogies are not so clear-cut. It is my intuition that by publishing online in the classroom and engaging in public discourse, the classroom might be a space where this opposition between expressionism and social-epistemic becomes more blurred. As Alcorn says of politics:

> It is an argument about who gets what and why. If politics is to be fair, we must fashion a culture in which everyone understands who suffers, why they suffer, and what those who suffer desire. Politics then requires a real, on-site understanding of human experience and a form of public discourse that can effectively communicate that difference. (4)

It seems that in the critical pedagogy classroom, it is necessary to celebrate individuals' voices and to understand the interrelations of expression, desire, and suffering. As Peter Elbow states in his famous exchange with David Bartholomae, Bartholomae assumes that

> if I celebrate 'independent, self-creative, self-expressive subjectivity,' I must be against the notion of people as socially constructed. But I am not. [...] You say in passing that I can't have it both ways, that I can't stick up for both perspectives on the human condition. [...] I insist I can have it both ways. [...] *Embracing Contraries* is entirely devoted to arguing for "both/and" thinking and trying to show the problems with "either/or" thinking[…]. (Bartholomae and Elbow 88)

This discussion, as well as other research in rhetoric and composition, has left me with more questions in regards to blogs and other new media. One of these questions concerns the changing ways in which attention is working in our society, and how students and ourselves are paying attention to certain structures. With an ever-increasing proliferation of easily accessible media and information, attention seems to become an issue of ever increasing import. When Geoffrey Sirc notes that his students state, "I have never actually listened to the words of these songs!", he concludes that "it's not that they're uninformed, it's just that they need practice in attentiveness, so they can refine their choosing" (113).

In his talk "The Future of Attention" at the University of Oregon's 2006 New Research Summit, Jim Crosswite discussed this very topic. He noted that Richard Lanham's recent book *The Economics of Attention* argues that information and access are no longer sccare; rather, "what is scarce is the human attention needed to make sense of information" (Crosswhite). Crosswhite, however, reversed the issue; instead of being concerned with the scarcity of attention, Crosswhite was concerned with “how we GIVE attention,” viewing attention as an intellectual virtue:

> The intellectual virtue of attention, or attentiveness, is the power to give the proper attention to the proper thing. This of course requires discipline, restraint, self-control, holding ourselves back so that the fitting thing, what we really seek, can have the space of attention in which to show up. It requires, obviously, know what the proper thing is. (Crosswhite)

University of Syracuse graduate student Derek Mueller, in his 2007 Computers and Writing talk “Blogging and the Orchestration of Attention It Demands,” adds that we must give attention to attention in the classroom, and how discussions need to be held about how blogging activities relate to alertness, shifts in rhythms of writing, and the potential for “productive digression” through attention. Mueller notes the importance of being skeptical of claims that attention should always be single-streamed. What these talks by Crosswhite and Mueller raise, importantly, are questions about the ways in which we give attention and how we need to talk about it in the classroom.

Attention is especially of importance in postmodernity, when, as cultural critic Lawrence Grossberg puts it, “The rupture of postmodernity is … in the relation between affect and significance. … It is not that nothing matters but that it doesn’t matter what matters” (147). This means that attention, ways of reading, and politics are wrapped up in desire and affect — and also a cynicism in postmodernism about what is important. Lisa Langstraat, in “The Point is There is No Point,” discusses what she calls “miasmic cynicism”: “a banal, unreflective and ‘unceasing attitude of negativity,’ … characterized by rejecting (an incapacity for recognizing) distinctions between what is important and what is trival” (300, qting. Arnett and Arneson). This cynicism raises serious concerns about affect in the classroom and in cultural critique, especially when we consider the proliferation of information and commodities in a digital age. Other scholars, such as Matthew Levy in “Cynicism, Social Epistemic, and the Institutional Context of College Composition,” Ilene Crawford in “Building a Theory of Affect in Cultural Studies Composition Pedagogy,” and Marshall Alcorn, have begun to critically examine how affect, desire, and cynicism work in the composition classroom, both for students and teachers. This, I believe, is especially of concern with blogs, especially when asking students to read blogs from different social positions, to take into considering various viewpoints, to change the ways in which they listen to others, and to develop agency in the public sphere (something, I am sure, most students are cynical about).

Additionally, how can we understand the reading processes that go into reading blogs? How does a reader's intention, attention, and practices affect her reading of a blog post, or multiple posts on a blog? How does the reader's identification with (or against) a blog or blogger affect her reading? How does software, such as RSS feeds, affect reading? How does the visual textuality of a blog affect reading? How does reading of a blog post change if it is read in an RSS reader instead of on the original site? What about the incorporation of images, text colors, and links affects how we read?

In addition to reading, how does one *listen* to blog posts? To follow Krista Ratcliffe's definition of “*rhetorical listening* as a trope for interpretive invention, that is, as a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture,” how does rhetorically listening to blog posts “cultivate conscious identifications in ways that promote productive communication, especially but not solely cross-culturally” (25)? How can we develop our students' (and our own) rhetorical listening to public discourse?

I also wonder about the transfer of knowledge and skills when using blogs. Yancey has stressed the need to be attuned to student transfer of writing skills. She describes what she calls "constructive transfer" as "the specific practice from which we may derive principles toward *protypical models*" (*Reflection* 50, emphasis original). Constructive transfer involves the ability to make generalizations across rhetorical situations, to be cognizant of those generalizations, and identity construction (50-51). How does blogging help develop such reflection and constructive transfer? Or, perhaps more accurately, how can we talk in class about blogging in ways that develop students' constructive transference abilities? These questions, related to affect, listening, reading, identification, and transfer, are ones I see as having critical import to a further understanding of blogs and their use in the classroom.

Conclusion

As James Berlin writes, "In teaching people to write and read, we are thus teaching them a way of experiencing the world" (*Rhetorics* 102), or, as I quoted him in the epigraph to this chapter, "To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality, and the best way of knowing and communicating it" ("Contemporary Composition" 256). He also writes that "as [Ira] Shor makes clear, the point of this [social-epistemic] classroom is that the liberated consciousness of students is the only educational objective worth considering, the only objective worth the risk of failure" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 23). While my focus throughout this thesis has been less on the ideological critique that Berlin would propose, it is my hope that in conceiving of the blogosphere in a way that can promote the most democratic exchange of ideas, we can help to foster more democratic public spaces online and develop public agency in our students. By viewing public spheres such as the blogosphere and the classroom as cityscapes, I hope to encourage dialogue across differences, to begin to seek answers to Derrida's "impossible but necessary" question: "How then to open the avenue of great debates, accessible to the majority, while yet enriching the multiplicity and the quality of public discourses, of evaluating agencies, of 'scenes' or places of visibility?" (qtd. in Robbins xii).

I began this thesis with certain questions in mind, as I asked in Chapter 1. These questions include: How can we best understand the blogosphere as a potential public sphere? How can we best understand blogs as public writing? What does a study of blogs as descendants of other public writing (i.e., zines) contribute to our understanding of blogs? What are the implications of these questions for writing pedagogy?

While my analysis throughout this thesis has attempted to answer these questions, it has raised further questions for the study of blogs. If, as I argued in Chapter 2, viewing the blogosphere as an ideal city is the most productive metaphor for promoting democratic discourse, what potential problems are there with privileging the urban over rural? How does this privileging of the urban life over the rural interact with other privileges granted to urban spaces (faster, more ubiquitous Internet access, closer proximity to health care providers, more opportunities for education, to name a few)? Additionally, Iris Marion Young is clear that the ideal city she prescribes does not exist but is instead a goal to work toward, which raises questions about the blogosphere as an ideal city: How do we work toward this model? What dangers are there that the blogosphere is becoming segregated — with most bloggers likely reading mostly only content with which they agree? How do marginalized folks gain the audience of those in the dominant culture when it is so easy to pass up even reading this material on the Internet? In the material city, protests, street theatre, and other public performances are harder to ignore because of their visibility. How, then, in the blogosphere, can there be a mechanism for visibility so that alternative voices are heard?

These last few questions intrigue me because I see them as located in the interaction of difference and ways of reading, writing, and listening. The questions I asked in the previous section (regarding desire, affect, and Krista Ratcliffe's concept of rhetorical listening) and my note at the beginning of this chapter that technologies affect how we write brings me to questions that I'd like to explore further. It would be interesting to follow the actual literate activities of bloggers and blog readers: How do they navigate when online? Under what conditions do they write? How do readers decide which blogs to read and which ones to ignore, and then, of those they read, what conditions lead them to respond with comments? When I consider how blogs are like zines, I wonder what could make a conservative man pick up something like *Fag Rag* or stop by *Feministing*, read its content, and actually listen. The reverse of that question might be worth as much inquiry: What would make someone like me — a leftist, feminist, queer man — read a conservative blog and actually listen? Additionally, I wonder how other literate activities interrelate with blogging. As I discussed in the first interchapter, I see my own blogging as, to use Sarah Sloane's term, "haunted" by other, prior and current, literate activities. What literate activities "haunt" bloggers, and how? How, too, do literate activities online transfer to material activities offline? I imagine case studies that seek answers to these questions could be fruitful in helping to understand the reading and writing habits of bloggers.

When I reflect on the exigencies of this thesis — my failed use of blogs in the classroom in contrast to my and others' success with blogs, my desire to foster democratic spaces and public discourse, and my commitment to the rhetorical and civic agency of my students — I consider what is at stake, especially in regards to education, literacy, technology, and democracy. To ask again Jim Porter's questions: "How will we use technology? How will we design technology? How will we engage technology?" (388). Avoiding utopian, dystopian, and dismissive perspectives of new technologies (and even of old technologies, for even the contextual and ideological uses of a pencil affect writing [Porter 376-377]) and instead understanding how we use, design, and engage technology is key in developing critical social and pedagogical practices. In regards to my work here, I continue to ask how we are to use, design, and engage new media in ways that make us more free — not free in a static sense, but free, in the words of John Dewey, "inasfar as we are becoming different than we have been" (136).

Notes

[1] I do not mean to imply here that blogs *are* more immediate — that is, not mediated — than print genres. Rather, they *seem* to be, as is one of the functions of new media. As Bolter and Grusin note, media in our culture invoke the dual logic of immediacy and hypermediacy, which are not only contradictory but interdependent (2-15). They write of the immediacy: "the logic of immediacy dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented" (5-6). It is not that blogs, or any other media, are actually immediate, but rather that our culture "wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them" (5). Miller and Shepherd too note that blogs feel immediate, or un-mediated, but are, "of course, highly mediated."

[2] Thanks to fellow graduate student Michael Gustie for pointing out this obvious fact about blogs and genre to me.

[3] While I use the term *literacy* here and throughout this thesis relatively unproblematically, I understand the term is a not value-free and carries with it certain connotations. As Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola point out, literacy is a loaded word, closely tied to the ways the world was colonized and connoting — though deceptively — personal, political, and social improvement. They ask if "we want to carry forward all these particular attachments and meanings and possibilities" to new communication technologies (360). Noting that literacy does not eliminate the disparity in privilege encoded in our society, they emphasize that literacy is not a value-free term and that "literacy alone — some set of basic skills — is not what improves people's lives" (352-353).

[4] I do not mean to imply that the Internet is not part of our material reality. Despite our use of the term "virtual reality," the Inernet (blogs included) are very much a part of our material reality. As Chris Villemarette, in his master's thesis, claims, "Digital artifacts are of particular interest because, despite the Internet being often described as a 'virtual world,' it is primarily *material*" (21-22, emphasis his).

[5] In addition to easier access to publishing, blogs offer the possibility for a wider audience. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article celebrating the tenth "Blogiversary" of blogs, *The Week* editor Harold Evans was quoted on his perspective on blogs:

> Coming from a print culture where the rule was check, check, source, source, I was chilled, in the early days of the blogosphere, by the easy dissemination of lies.
>
> Did you know that 9/11 was the work of the Mossad? How else can you explain that the 4,000 Jews were tipped off to stay away that morning? Gibberish, of course, but widely believed in the Muslim world.
>
> In Indonesia, Tom Friedman reported, only 5% of the population could get on the Web, but these 5% spread rumor as fact: "They say, 'He got it from the Internet.' They think it's the Bible."

> In this case, the revealed "truth" was a blog by one Sy Adeeb, writing from Alexandria, Va., under the logo of Information Times (with an address at the National Press Building in Washington, which had no trace of him). When I tracked him down, he told me he got it from Al Manar, the Hezbollah station in Beirut.
>
> Once upon a time, Adeeb would be sending out smudged mimeographed sheets that would never see the light of day. Now, as bloggers on the Web, Adeeb and others like him have a megaphone to the world, with this spurious authenticity of electronic delivery. (qtd. in Varadarajan)

Evans qualifies this diatribe against blogs by stating afterward that there are some great things about blogs, but what strikes me as interesting in this is the belief that blogs, in general, are a medium full of lies, based on a few examples, and that the real problem is that people with credibility have a wider audience than they once did when the only had mimeographs instead of Internet connections. Evans's commentary seems to come from a cultural belief in the illegitimacy of the citizen as expert.

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