

ABSTRACT

BARNETT, RICHARD SCOT. *A Space for Agency: Rhetorical Agency, Spatiality, and the Production of Relations in Supermodernity*. (Under the direction of Carolyn R. Miller)

Rhetorical agency has surfaced recently as an important source of discussion and debate in contemporary rhetorical theory. In some recent scholarship, including Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's and Carl G. Herndl and Adela C. Licona's, rhetoricians have worked to rearticulate a role for agency after and within the de-centering of the modernist self suggested in much poststructuralist and postmodernist thinking, establishing in the process a conception of agency as "a field of relations" operating outside of the human subject but nevertheless constraining and enabling potential actions. In what I term both/and conceptions of agency, external determinants, such as ideology, historicity, and sociality, serve to enable and constrain agentive capacity by limiting, as Herndl and Licona suggest, the agent functions available to human subjects. Missing from these accounts, however, is how spatiality—in collaboration with historicity and sociality—constitutes a similar external determinant constraining and enabling agent functions in social systems and, more specifically, in rhetorical situations.

In this thesis, I address this gap by situating rhetorical agency as a field of relations involving various determinants, including spatiality, historicity, and sociality, that together serve to produce relations within the conditions of late capitalism. Focusing specifically on spatiality in the production of relations, I argue that rhetorical theory tends to privilege symbolic or imagined spaces over real or material spaces, a preference that, as Roxanne Mountford suggests, often ignores how material arrangements serve as constraints within communicative events. Furthermore, and as I argue in this thesis,

recognizing how real and imagined spaces produce relations in lived spaces may in turn suggest additional agent functions already available within rhetorical spaces.

To illustrate how agency functions as a field of relations in rhetorical spaces, I focus on non-places—ubiquitous utilitarian spaces such as airport terminals, malls, supermarkets, etc.—that, as Marc Augé argues, are designed to facilitate specific roles or agent functions. As such, non-places, as described by Augé, offer a unique social space in which to examine the limits of agency as a social location producing relations insofar they constrain agency by limiting occupants' shared identities, relations, and histories.

In particular, I examine two specific non-places—the international airport terminal and the first-year composition classroom—in terms of the agentive capacities constituting relations within these spaces. As an introduction to non-places and their importance within the conditions of late capitalism, and in particular their capacities to constrain relations, identities, and histories expressive of anthropological places, I offer an analysis of terminal space in which I argue that, by virtue of their role as utilitarian transit spaces, terminals serve to limit the agent functions available to travelers. In this respect, I argue, travelers are interpellated, in the Althusserian sense, into de-historicized agent functions always already constituted within the terminal's field of relations. In Chapter 3, I extend these arguments, suggesting that the first-year composition classroom may be understood as a similar form of non-place, constraining student's shared relations, identities, and histories through pedagogies designed exclusively around the inhabitation of imagined geographies. Building on Edward W. Soja's concept of the trialectics of spatiality, I argue that composition studies' emphases on imagined geographies, such as the discourse community, serve to mask the material conditions informing the teaching

and practice of writing in composition courses. To reveal additional agent functions available to student writers in classroom non-place, I conclude, compositionists should develop pedagogies that work to balance emphases on real, imagined, and lived spaces and their complex interrelationships within the production of relations.

**A SPACE FOR AGENCY: RHETORICAL AGENCY, SPATIALITY, AND THE
PRODUCTION OF RELATIONS IN SUPERMODERNITY**

by
RICHARD SCOT BARNETT

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DEDICATION

To Jhondra

We did not know we had come so far.

What did you see along the way?

Flowers and stones, strangers and books,

water and light . . . That path

looked so different, so particular,

while we were travelers, and its arcs,

now that we have come to rest,

as mysteriously as ever,

as nearly perfect a shape

as ever we'll discern.

Mark Doty

BIOGRAPHY

Scot Barnett received a BA in English from Penn State University in 1999. After teaching high school English in Raleigh, he enrolled as a MA student with a concentration in rhetoric and composition at North Carolina State University. In August 2005, he will begin a doctoral program in rhetoric and composition at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

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Chapter 1

Agency and Spatiality in Rhetorical Theory

An adequate account of human agency must, first, be connected to a theory of the acting subject; and second, must situate action in *time and space* as a continuous flow of conduct, rather than treating purposes, reasons, etc., as somehow aggregated together.

Anthony Giddens (2)

In rhetorical theory, notions of agency inform to a great extent how the discipline conceives of and examines various oratorical and discursive practices. How much agency we are willing to endow (or locate in) rhetors, audiences, texts, or rhetorical situations affects in turn the scope and potential of rhetoric both as a *techné* and as a critical and theoretical perspective. And though the question of agency has long informed theories and research in rhetorical studies, its presence as a specific source of debate is a relatively recent development. In part, the currency of agency in rhetorical theory accompanies a broader theoretical debate concerning questions of identity and subjectivity following the emergence of poststructuralist and postmodernist (re)conceptions of the human subject as fragmented and de-centered. In place of rationalism's coherent and unified *individual*—whose will to act is internally inscribed and therefore relatively autonomous, that is, free from external constraints, including sociality and ideology—poststructuralism positions a constituted *subject*—whose “will to act” is conditioned and constrained by ideological discourses that serve to shape behaviors and identities so that they are congruent with the specific subject positions called for by constitutive discourses. As Paul Smith suggests in *Discerning the Subject*,

poststructuralist thought (which, for him, includes the works of Freud and Marx in addition to those by Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, etc.) concentrates on the “subject” “in order to question its traditionally privileged epistemological status. In particular, there has been a sustained effort [in poststructuralism] to question the role of the ‘subject’ as the intending and knowing manipulator of the object, or as the conscious and coherent originator of meanings and actions” (xxviii). As poststructuralism succeeded in de-situating the Enlightenment’s conception of the centered and coherent individual, it as well unseated—to varying degrees—that individual’s agentic capacity, re-imagining the capacity to act independent of external constraints as utopian or illusory.¹

In terms of rhetorical theory, the de-centering of the liberal-humanist individual greatly complicates many of the agentic capacities—including the canon of invention (Crowley, “Response” 1)—that have informed and ordered the discipline’s long-held conceptions of the production and reception of discursive practices. For some rhetorical theorists, and for Smith to a certain extent, poststructuralist and postmodernist notions of subjectivity de-center the individual so much that they leave little to no room for actions resistant to constitutive ideologies—we are, as Louis Althusser argues, always already constituted as subjects and therefore can never escape the omnipresence of ideology (Smith 15). In “Shifting Agency: Agency, *Kairos*, and the Possibilities of Social

¹ As will become clearer a bit later, the term “capacity” aims to illustrate the agent functions available to subject/agents in non-place. In this respect, capacity serves in some ways as a foil to constitutive theories of agency in which subjects retain little or no capacity to act. For Gilles Deleuze, whose work with Félix Guattari focuses almost exclusively on bodies’ capacities to act and produce within the capitalist machine, understanding agents or bodies by their capacities to function in social modes or settings dramatically alters Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment conceptions of the human: “if you define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal or a human being not by its form, its organs and its functions and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable” (626).

Action,” Carl G. Herndl and Adela C. Licona suggest that “the question of agency emerged in rhetoric and professional communication when the postmodern critique denied us recourse to the enlightenment individual of liberal ideology, yet failed to replace that individual with a potent social actor” (27). As Sharon Crowley similarly observes, “Postmodernism is deeply implicated in the problem of discerning a space of operations for rhetorical agency, not only because it delineated the limitations of liberal humanist notions of agency but because some versions of postmodernism forward a linguistic determinism that nearly eliminates individual or collective human agency altogether, subsuming it in the flow of discursive power” (“Response” 1).

For Crowley, the loss of invention at the hands of polysemy and indeterminism has serious consequences for rhetoric; “indeed,” she suggests, “an argument can be made that there is simply no point in our continuing to study rhetoric unless we are able to forge a notion of rhetorical agency that satisfies current scholarly assumptions about how language and human behavior work. Without some notion or notions of rhetorical agency and a concomitant theory or theories of invention, it seems to me, rhetorical thought is left with the theoretical equivalent of a bumper sticker: ‘rhetoric happens’” (1-2). Though my focus in this thesis is less directly concerned with the traditional canon of invention than with the relationship between rhetorical agency and symbolic and material space, Crowley’s sense that the conditions of postmodern thought run contrary to, and perhaps threaten to subvert, rhetoric’s dependence on theories of invention illustrates the significant theoretical tensions and contradictions facing many rhetorical theorists today.²

² As Crowley would no doubt agree, it seems to me that any attempt to theorize the reassertion of rhetorical agency necessarily concerns to some degree the act of invention. Furthermore, invention, in the Aristotelian sense, connects agency and spatiality—in ways similar to those proposed in this thesis—insofar as the topics constitute a *place* from which rhetors locate the available means of persuasion.

Unable to fully dismiss the issues of authorship, identity, and authority so aptly complicated by poststructuralist and postmodernist theorists, and unwilling, or unable for that matter, to fully relinquish rhetorical situations and their constituents to indeterminacy and immanence (to use Ihab Hassan's terms for the principal tendencies in postmodernism), contemporary theories of rhetorical agency must consequently perform a complex balancing act between the de-centered subject and the more autonomous rhetorical agent.³ As Ronald Walter Greene suggests about the apparent incongruity between the conditions of postmodernity and the efficacy of agency, "as long as rhetorical agency is harnessed to a communicative model of interaction, rhetorical studies is destined to lodge a permanent anxiety over the quantity and quality of rhetorical agency necessary to change the structures of power at the center of its intellectual labor" (202). This anxiety, he continues, "will grow more tortured due to the need to rescale and reframe the rhetorical situation for different media, spaces, and temporalities capable of investigating the disjunctive spheres of global production" (202).

Though Greene's assessment of the problem of agency in rhetorical theory suggests a rather unsettling future for rhetoricians working to conceptualize, or even transgress, the boundaries separating agentive capacity from the disjunctive spheres of production in late capitalism, it nevertheless captures the argumentative dilemma informing and constraining such attempts. Conceptions of agency, therefore, must find ways to account for the apparent difference between the individual and the subject, that is

³ While indeterminacy for Hassan suggests a more direct constraining of agency in that it embodies pluralism, randomness, and heterodoxy, immanence suggest some agentive potential insofar as Hassan defines it as "the capacity of mind to generalize itself in symbols, intervene more and more into nature, act upon itself through its own abstractions and so become, increasingly, im-mediately, its own environment" (593).

the Enlightenment or modernist “illusion of whole and coherent personal organization” and the poststructuralist and postmodernist imagining of subjectivity as “the series or the conglomeration of *positions*, subject-positions, provisional and not necessarily infeasible, into which a person is called momentarily by the discourses and the world that he/she inhabits” (Smith xxxv). For some rhetorical theorists, the poststructuralist critique of “the autonomous individual is taken . . . to also entail an attack on the possibility for human action. In some extreme forms, the decentered subject becomes a marionette whose actions are completely determined by those cultural forces that effectively are ‘pulling the strings’” (Jasinski 564). For Smith, however, the de-centering of the modernist individual—who is literally in-divisible—does not necessarily spell the end of agency, which he sees as a distinct form of ideological resistance. Citing feminism as a significant and successful complication of the dualistic conceptions of identity and agency suggested in the terms individual and subject, Smith proposes a third term, agent, “used to mark the idea of a form of subjectivity where, by virtue of the contradictions and disturbances in and among subject-positions, the possibility (indeed, the actuality) of resistance to ideological pressure is allowed for (even though that resistance too must be produced in an ideological context)” (xxxv). Ideologically opposed to the illusionary and “purely theoretical” conceptions of the individual and the subject, Smith’s both-and notion of agency serves as one of the first attempts to reconcile the agentive capacities of the autonomous individual and the de-centered subject.

As rhetorical theory works to recontextualize the role and scope of agency within the conditions of postmodernism, it often does so from a position analogous to Smith’s third term. In fact, as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argues, contemporary theories of rhetorical

agency must be more diverse, more “protean,” than essentialist modernist conceptions, suggesting a closer affinity with both-and (poststructural or postmodern) notions of rhetorical agency:

What needs to be resisted is a simplistic, humanistic view of agency rooted in the theory of George Campbell and his contemporaries, and the simplistic approaches to cause and effect that arose out of some social scientific approaches to the study of mass communication, for example. What is needed are synthetic, complex views of authorship as articulation, of the power of form as it emerges in texts of all sorts, of the role of audiences in appropriating and reinterpreting texts when they emerge and through time, and of the links of all these to the cultural context, material and symbolic, in which discourse circulates. (16)

For Campbell, agency is complex and protean, resisting universality and determinism through what Barbara Biesecker might characterize as processes of becoming rather than Being (Biesecker 27). Conceiving of “sound and useful theories of rhetorical agency” within the conditions of postmodernism—or, as Smith would emphasize, its *theoretical* conditions—therefore requires us to “consider all available options” (Crowley, “Response” 7).⁴ As Campbell suggests, simplistic conceptions of modernist agency, in which causality is governed by an intrinsic belief in the autonomous will of the individual, fail to fully articulate a contemporary theory of agency. Despite poststructuralism’s de-centering of the illusion of the individual, its constituted subjects nevertheless tend to maintain some capacity to resist dominant ideological discourses. Althusser, for instance, complicates Marx’s theory of class struggle by suggesting that ideology “should no longer be considered as a distorting lens, but rather as a constitutive component of reality” (Smith 14). In place of Marx’s false consciousness, Althusser

⁴ As Crowley notes, sound and useful theories of agency may be complicated by rhetoric’s traditional habit of bricolage: “Rhetoric has been castigated for its eclecticism by practitioners of supposedly more rigorous disciplines for thousands of years, and our intellectual habit of bricolage may be one reason that we are nearly invisible within the American academy. To embrace change is not to support slap-dashery, though; clearly, the politics entailed in any choice of theoretical tool—and they all have a politics—must be inclusive and diverse” (“Response” 7).

presents an image of ideology as material and mechanistic, constituting individuals as subjects through the process of interpellation. The presence of multiple internalized subject positions, “pocketing and animating the machinery of the social,” suggests, as Bradford Vivian argues, that subjectivity exists as “a *permeable* space” where “the self is never reducible to one subject position” insofar as it is able to pass “between, across, and even through” multiple subject positions (314, emphasis his). Put differently, in the permeable space of the subject position, the agent is both *constrained and enabled* by/through constitutive ideologies. Though brought into being by discourse, the agent retains the capacity to shift among positions, to ignore some positions altogether, or to inhabit several positions at once (315).

I will return to Althusser’s conception of the interpellated subject in Chapter 2. For now, what I mean to emphasize here is how agency, though a significant source of tension in postmodern rhetorical theory, offers us a space from which to critically engage the complex dialectical relationship between material and symbolic context—the machinery of the social—and individuality/subjectivity. For all of the theorists cited above, “sound and useful” conceptions of agency must in some way take into account how contextual factors affect the individual/subject’s capacity to resist what Maurice Charland would call the constitutive rhetorics of ideological discourse. No longer able to return to the illusion of the coherent modernist individual, and unwilling to fully relinquish the constituted subject to indeterminacy, rhetorical theorists must negotiate a difficult path through contemporary critical and cultural theory in order to carve out a space for resistance and intervention⁵—a space, in other words, for rhetoric.

⁵ As will become clearer later in the thesis, the terms resistance and intervention often serve to accent the capacities to act within and against constitutive ideologies. In *Discerning the Subject*, Smith favors

In this chapter, therefore, I examine several conceptions of agency in rhetorical theory, including Campbell's and Herndl and Licona's, to suggest some possibilities and constraints facing rhetorical agents in postmodernity. In many of the current discussions in rhetorical theory, agency is addressed primarily at the level of the agent; "the cultural context" informing or possibly even constituting the agent, though certainly important in these arguments, nevertheless tends to be peripheralized as an omnipresent and homogenous context more concerned with dominant ideology or discourse than with materiality. Though both Campbell and Herndl and Licona suggest that agency is at least partly affected by material conditions, neither attempts to formulate a theory of agency outside of symbolic space. With this in mind, I move to address this gap by situating rhetorical agency within the materiality of socially and historically produced space. As Edward W. Soja argues in *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, "organized space is not a separate structure with its own autonomous laws of construction and transformation . . . It represents, instead, a dialectically defined component of the general relations of production, relations which are simultaneously social and spatial" (78). Space, in this view, is directly implicated in the production of relations in late capitalism, embodying—in specific material structures as well as in urban and suburban geographies—many of the constitutive rhetorics suggested in current theories of agency. Moreover, I suggest that the spatial, historical, and social "trialectic" later described by Soja in *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and*

resistance when he discusses oppositional methodologies, including feminism. Anthony Giddens, however, settles on intervention when he writes about the production of agency within dynamic social systems. In the case of my argument in which I mean to dramatize the production of relations in specific rhetorical spaces, I tend to prefer Giddens' term over Smith's; to intervene in the (re)production of social systems, including spatiality, implies in part a kind of resistance but also an immersion in systems of relations in which agency functions recursively to constrain and enable action.

Other Real-and-Imagined Places can perhaps best be observed in any number of themed or commercial spaces—including airport terminals, casinos, malls, supermarkets, fast food franchises, etc.—which, as Mark Gottdiener argues in *The Theming of America*, are expressive of the ubiquity and utilitarianess of global consumer capitalism insofar as they “and our consumer oriented mass culture are integrated through the structure of consumption” (128). Given their carefully contrived design and rendering, such that they communicate to their users or consumers “a ‘totalizing’ modernity through a rhetoric of ubiquity” (Wood 327), commercial spaces, or “non-places,” offer theories of rhetorical agency a codified environment in which to initially examine the relationship between agent/agency and spatiality. As I suggest in this thesis, focusing on rhetorical agency within the conditions of late capitalism’s utilitarian non-places offers a conception of agency that is neither fully intrinsic nor fully extrinsic, suggesting the possibility of a rhetorical agent as both “maker and made” (Soper, qtd. in Jasinski 563). Additionally, an analysis of the relationship between agency and spatiality may also serve to complicate rhetoric’s long-standing privileging of symbolic—or to use Soja’s term, imagined—space insofar as the discursive spaces and commonplaces that rhetoricians routinely imagine and inhabit tend to resemble “totalizing” and ubiquitous non-places, providing consumer subjects with “easy-to-decipher visual or discursive signs [so that they appear] somewhat familiar to the experience of consumers” (Gottdiener 132).

The Problem of Agency in Rhetorical Theory

We do not need “easy generalizations,” we do need difficult ones—for example, the more difficult though less pious procedure of not assuming agency to be everywhere present, but trying to explain why it is there and why it isn’t where it isn’t.

Bruce Robbins (252)

In a 2003 presentation at the conference for the Alliance of Rhetoric Societies, Campbell outlines “a series of propositions about rhetorical agency” (3) that aims to bring together many of the concepts, assumptions, and implications informing—implicitly and otherwise—how rhetoric conceives of and addresses agency within the conditions of postmodernism. For Campbell, rhetorical agency most directly concerns “the capacity to act, that is, to have the competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one’s community” (4). Though she emphasizes speaking and writing as instrumental components to conceptions of agency in rhetorical theory, Campbell’s notion of agency may be understood more generally—and in concert with Giddens’ definition—as a mode of intervention, which may be enacted rhetorically, as she suggests, through writing and speaking: “such competency,” she argues, “permits entry into ongoing cultural conversations and is the *sine qua non* of public participating, much less resistance as a counter-public” (4). Though intervention may involve any number of actions, from subtle identificatory changes within constitutive ideologies to outright opposition to dominant ideology, the capacity to write or speak is often connected to intervention arguments, particularly those of marginalized voices. As Donna Haraway notes about the importance of writing in the oppositional methodologies of US Third World Feminists, “the poetry and stories of US women of colour are repeatedly about writing, about access to the power to signify” (175). In such modes of

intervention, she observes, writing assumes “the power to survive . . . on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other” (175).

Through her reading of Sojourner Truth’s famous speech at the 1851 women’s rights convention in Akron, Ohio, Campbell identifies five axioms constituting, as Sharon Crowley notes in her ARS response paper, “a heuristic for thinking our way through whatever rhetorical space remains available, at this juncture, for positing some notion or notions of rhetorical agency” (1). Specifically, Campbell proposes that rhetorical agency “(1) is communal and participatory, hence, both constituted and constrained by externals that are material and symbolic; (2) is ‘invented’ by authors who are points of articulation; (3) emerges in artistry or craft; (4) is effected through form; and (5) is perverse, that is, inherently, protean, ambiguous, open to reversal” (3). These axioms, Crowley contends, suggest varying “sorts or levels of agency” (“Response” 3); however, the common thread comprising this heuristic suggests that agency, as it appears in contemporary rhetorical theory, more closely resembles poststructuralist and postmodernist notions of agency than Enlightenment models which tend to imply “that human beings are self-aware agents who are ‘naturally’ endowed with the ability to influence their environments within limits imposed by the laws of physics” (4).

Though Campbell’s second axiom includes invention in its conceptualization of the author-agent (or author-function), it does so via a deconstructive sense of the author as a “point of articulation” rather than as an “originator” (9) in the liberal-humanist sense of the term. To illustrate her sense that authors are both makers and made, Campbell cites Sean Burke’s analogy of authorship in *The Death and Return of the Author* in which he attempts to reassert at least a limited or constrained potential for invention in the wake

of the Barthesian death of author: “Observing light passing through a prism (although ‘we know’ that the prism is not the absolute origin of the resplendent spectacle before us), we do not deny its effect upon the light, still less call for the death of the prism” (qtd. in Campbell 9). The prism here becomes instrumental to the production of light-effect; however, its purpose and potential remain significantly constrained—ultimately, the prism, despite its capacity to make visible its invisible determinants, is still an instrument, constructed to fulfill its utilitarian function and little else. In this sense, the analogy of the prism serves to approximate both-and conceptions evident in many current theories of agency and subjectivity, including Smith’s and Campbell’s.

Though my conceptualization of agency is primarily informed by Campbell’s five axioms, my focus in this thesis will necessarily be more modest. Given that spatiality largely constitutes an external constraint within rhetorical situations, Campbell’s first axiom—that agency is “constituted and constrained by material and symbolic elements of context and culture” (5)—seems most relevant to an analysis of the relationship between agency/agent and spatiality. Moreover, by focusing on this first axiom, I hope to extend Smith’s historicizing of the progression from the early modernist illusion of the whole and coherent individual to the reassertion of the agent after and within the conditions of poststructuralism and postmodernism by situating space as a significant contributor to the production of social relations. Responding to what she sees as a postmodern model of “little agency” (as opposed to a liberal-humanist model of “big agency”), Crowley argues that Campbell’s first axiom “posit[s] a very small role for human volition” (“Response” 5). “In such models,” she continues, “to discriminate an individual agent or agents is thought to be impossible or quite beside the point; agents (‘the media,’ ‘the CIA,

‘corporate capital,’ ‘the forces of evil,’) are depicted as so powerful that they can be neither understood nor resisted, or else the workings of the material and symbolic realms are characterized as so complex or enduring that it is impossible to determine the extent or nature of their relations to human agency” (5-6). In many respects, Crowley’s criticism here illuminates many of the roadblocks facing both-and conceptions of agency and subjectivity within rhetorical theory—namely, how to theorize the existence of an agent within the constitutive rhetorics of omnipresent ideologies. One way, perhaps, to move beyond this apparent impasse would be to reconsider the positioning of agency in rhetorical situations such that the material and symbolic realms function not only as forms of constraint but also as scenes or enablers of agentive capacity.

In her assessment of constitutive agency, Crowley seems to identify agency as intrinsic to individuals (though, earlier in her response, she agrees with Campbell that texts may have agentive capacity). For Crowley as well as for Campbell, agency, when discussed contextually—that is, outside of the individual’s autonomous will to act—presents several challenges, including “how to recognize the force of external constraints, such as subject positions constituted by power . . . [and] how to incorporate the possibility of resistance into their formulations” (Campbell 6). In “Shifting Agency,” Herndl and Licona address these challenges by repositioning constitutive agency, Campbell’s first axiom, outside of the agent, a move that, paradoxically perhaps, begins to suggest opportunities for agency within its constitutive function as a social and relational phenomenon. For Herndl and Licona, rhetorical agency and authority, in the Foucaultian sense, form a dialectic in which authority exists “as both a potential constraint and a potential resource to agency depending upon specific contexts” (3):

As a figure constructed within institutional relations of value and power, authority often limits and controls discourse and action. Authority, like the author function in Foucault, often regulates discursive behavior and the creation of meaning; it rarifies discourse, in Foucault's terms (1972), regulating who can speak and what topics are legitimate subjects of discourse . . . Agency speaks, then, to the possibilities for a subject to enter into a discourse and effect change—even change that might serve to further entrench a dominant social order. (2-4)

Suggestive of Althusser's theory of the multiplicity of constituted subject positions, Herndl and Licona maintain that "the same person is sometimes an agent of change, sometimes a figure of established authority, and sometimes an ambiguous, even contradictory, combination of both social functions" (4). Their theory, therefore, attempts to explain "the way social subjects move between identities and discursive functions and how we are all articulated in passing and shifting ways to different spaces and practices" (4). Below, I will more specifically address the authors' emphasis on spatiality in the production of agency; more generally, for Herndl and Licona the contextual forces constraining and enabling agency function in much the same way as Foucault's sense of power functions—as an emergent, circulating, and relational thematic, existing, as he writes, "only when it is put into action" (qtd. in Herndl and Licona 8):

As a general rule of thumb we suggest that scholars mystify social reality whenever they use agency after a transitive verb. Agency cannot be seized, assumed, claimed, had, possessed, or any of the many synonyms for these transitive verbs. As Susan Bordo (1998) has argued of power, agency "is not in fact 'held' at all; rather people and groups are positioned differentially within it" (p.166). (7)

If we understand agency as a set of relations in which we are differentially positioned, they argue, we may begin to complicate "big" notions of agency—where agency "resides in a set of objective rhetorical abilities of the rhetor, or even her past accomplishments"

(8)—by positioning agency as a form of power “at the intersection of a network of semiotic, material, and, yes, intentional elements and relational practices” (8).

Reconceiving of agency as a series of shifting social relations suggests a similar reconception of the agent, who, unlike in liberal-humanist models of agency, negotiates “a matrix of material and social conditions” (8) that both constrains and enables action depending on the subject’s capacity to self-consciously inhabit the positions available within rhetorical situations. Again foregrounding Foucault and his theories of power and authority, Herndl and Licona suggest that social or rhetorical situations call subjects into being, and not vice versa; that is, to borrow Charland’s Althusserian reading of constitutive discourse, such situations for Herndl and Licona “always already presume the constitution of subjects” insofar as they “base themselves upon the asserted existence of a particular type of subject” (Charland 134). More specifically, Herndl and Licona see agency within the conditions of postmodernism as an intersectional “agent function,” defining it as “the conjunction of the subject’s dispositions and the temporary and contingent conditions of possibility for rhetorical action” (8-9):

If we read the agent-agency metonymy backwards and consider the move from agency to agent, we can argue that it is the social phenomenon of agency that brings the agent into being . . . Agency is a social/semiotic intersection that offers only a potential for action, an opportunity . . . But the subject’s ability to seize the potential for action is never guaranteed or permanent. The subject becomes an agent when she is articulated into the agent function . . . Like Foucault’s author function, the agent function arises from the intersection of material, (con)textual, and ideological conditions and practices. (13-14)

By acknowledging the intersectional conditions of the agent function, they argue, we may begin to develop a postmodern theory of agency that takes into account the opportunistic or kairotic moments informing the productions of social spaces. Noting rhetoric’s twin conceptions of kairos as both “the power of the opportune moment” and, as Michael

Carter's interpretation of Plato's *Gorgias* suggests, "a way of seizing the opportunity of the moment in improvisational speaking" (qtd. in Herndl and Licona 22-23), Herndl and Licona extend these formulations of *kairos* to "read agency as the momentary conjunction of multiple material, semiotic, and intentional conditions of possibility" (23). Thus, as Lawrence Grossberg argues, "there can be no universal theory of agency; agency can only be described in its contextual enactments" (qtd. in Herndl and Licona 23).

As I suggest above, Herndl and Licona's conception of agency as agent function, as part of the relational practices informing our authoritative capacities in society, most closely conforms to Campbell's first axiom in which "culturally available subject-positions are, simultaneously, obstacles and opportunities, [suggesting] shifting, not fixed, identities" (8). In this sense, it is useful to read Herndl and Licona's argument as mutually informed by and informing Campbell's brief survey of the principal perspectives of agency in rhetorical theory. Whereas Crowley sees only the opportunity for "little agency" in Campbell's first axiom, Herndl and Licona see a complex and shifting matrix of multiple agentive capacities, available even to constituted subjects who are "multiply situated and differently able and authorized to speak, act, and intervene" (22), suggesting a conception of agency that is socially produced and therefore dialectically related to the agent inhabiting or moving through social space. "In contrast to the implied model of agency as an attribute or possession of individuals," they suggest early in the essay, "agency is *a social location* and opportunity into and out of which rhetors, even postmodern subjects, move" (8, emphasis mine). As both Campbell and Crowley indicate, a postmodern conception of rhetorical agency must include both symbolic and material locations; however, as is often the case in theoretical debates, the

symbolic (or discursive, as Crowley sees it) is ultimately privileged over the material. Consequently, in rhetorical theories of agency, the social locations informing or producing agency tend to privilege abstracted space, such as subject positions, over “real” or material space. Though specifically addressing tendencies in cultural and critical theory to view “space as a background, a backdrop against which the real stuff of history and politics is enacted” (39), Raka Shome’s criticism of cultural and critical theory’s privileging of abstracted space at the expense of real or material space may be similarly applied to abstracted conceptions of space in rhetorical theory:

[E]specially these days, space tends to be invoked as a metaphor to name subject positions and identities. Abundant spatial metaphors operate in cultural theory today to demarcate social positions of domination and marginality. Tropes of “center,” “margin,” “periphery,” “location,” “dislocation,” “displacement,” “decentering,” “recentering,” “borders,” and “in-between” all point to a growing spatial vocabulary in critical theory. As scholars have noted, though, invoking space only as a metaphor rather than a structuring material reality is problematic because metaphoric invocations of space too often assume space as known, as a given, and as unproblematic . . . Thus, despite this seeming spatial turn in cultural theory, what remains insufficiently addressed are the very real and material ways in which space constitutes a site and a medium for the enactment of cultural power that has important implications for rethinking some key concepts in cultural theory, such as identity and agency. (39-40)

Later in their essay, Herndl and Licona assert that contemporary notions of agency must in some way account for its locatedness in space; “social practice, context, and space,” they argue, “constitute a place in which agency is enacted. But this place is temporal as well. A ‘place in time,’ to use Steven Mailloux’s (2002) phrase, where the material and the temporal combine to constitute the possibility of agency and authority” (16). In other words, as Soja suggests in *Thirdspace*, conceptions of agency and the agent function must keep in mind the “triple dialectic” or “trialectics of being”—including spatiality, historicity, and sociality—informing the production of everyday

relations within the conditions of postmodernism (6). Of course, focusing on the agentive capacities informing our relations to non-places, such as airports or contemporary college classrooms, does not mean ignoring completely the symbolic in favor of the real. Rather, and as I hope to show in this thesis, reasserting the presence and importance of material space in the production of relations serves both to complicate rhetoric's long-held conceptualizations and privileging of symbolic space and to more completely theorize how the symbolic and material intersect to constrain and enable agents in rhetorical situations.

Agency, Rhetorical Space, and the Trialectics of Being

Like words, places are articulated by a thousand usages. They are thus transformed into "variations"—not verbal or musical, but spatial—of a question that is the mute *motif* of the interweavings of places and gestures: *where to live?* These dances of bodies haunted by the desire to live somewhere tell interminable stories of the Utopia we construct in the sites through which we pass. They form a rhetoric of space.

Michel de Certeau

In *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, Anthony Giddens proposes a theory of human agency as "*a continuous flow of conduct . . . involving [in Heideggerian terms] a 'stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world'*" (55, emphasis his). For Giddens, theories of agency must maintain an awareness of the "interdependence of action and structure"; "we must grasp," he argues, "the *time-space relations inherent in the constitution of all social interaction*" (3, emphasis his). Much like Smith's re-visioning of agency after and within the de-centering of the

poststructuralist subject, Giddens proposes his conception of agency—and less directly his important theory of structuration—as responsive to the near complete absence of the agent in structuralist and (though he never uses the term) poststructuralist thought. In terms of rhetorical theory, Giddens’ understanding of agency as a series of relational practices expressive of spatial, historical, and social contexts further extends Herndl and Licona’s sense of agency as a social location. Furthermore, by situating the agent and agency within the complex processes of social engagement, Giddens infers what Soja would later call the “trialectics of being” wherein spatiality, historicity, and sociality participate equally in the production of “lived space,” or—as Soja more often prefers—real-and-imagined space.

In the first chapter of *Central Problems*, Giddens argues that structuralism, particularly as it has informed perspectives and methodologies in the social sciences, diminishes the importance of referentiality in social interaction by privileging what he calls discursive consciousness over practical consciousness, that is the capacity to metacognitively isolate and examine the rules inherent in a particular system over the capacity call upon tacit stocks of knowledge in the everyday production of social activity (5). In structuralist theories, including Saussure’s and Derrida’s, Giddens observes, language tends to function as a complete system, whether producing meaning through signification or deferring it endlessly through an indeterminate chain of signification. For Saussure, then, the idea of difference, wherein “terms acquire identity or continuity in so far as they are differentiated from one another as oppositions or differences within the totality that is *langue*,” serves to “complete the insulation of *langue* as a self-contained system: the ‘value’ of the components of language derive solely from the demarcations

drawn between them” (11-12). Similarly, for Derrida, *différance*—despite its intent to transcend Saussurian structuralism by integrating the spatial and the temporal into the idea of difference such that difference exists “only within the temporal process of deferring, the continual loss of the present to the future” (31)—nevertheless constitutes an intrinsic system of its own in which play or writing continually defers meaning through the traces or spaces inherent in the notion of difference: As Derrida writes, “*Différance* is thus a structure and a movement which can only be grasped in relation to the opposition of presence/absence. *Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of traces of differences, of the *spacing* whereby elements are connected to one-another” (qtd. in Giddens 31, emphasis Derrida’s). Both of these ontologies, Giddens asserts, fail to account for the “recursive character of language” as a system produced and reproduced within and among other social systems:

The recursive character of language—and, by generalisation, of social systems also—cannot be understood unless we also understand that the means whereby such systems are reproduced, and thus exist *as* systems, contain within them the seeds of change. ‘Rule-governed creativity’ is not merely (as Chomsky’s linguistics suggests) the employment of fixed, given rules whereby new sentences are generated; *it is at the same time the medium whereby those rules are reproduced and hence in principle modified.* (18, emphasis his)

According to Giddens, by isolating language as a closed system, structuralism fashions a fiction of meaning within the symbolic process of signification where the signifier is privileged more than the signified. For both Saussure and Derrida, the closed systems employed in their respective theories share a similar loss of referentiality. As Giddens observes, ambiguity often surrounds Saussure’s descriptions of the signified, which in some cases seems to reflect and refer to social reality but in others constitutes only a mental image, an idea, or a concept (15). Similarly, and to a predictably higher degree,

Derrida's notion of writing resists referentiality insofar as it "breaks with everything that might relate a text to an object-world" (36). For Giddens, ultimately, structuralism, by privileging a closed system of discursive production over recursive and dialectical relations constituting social interaction, has no "mode of coping" with "*practical consciousness*—non-discursive, but not unconscious, knowledge of social institutions—as involved in social reproduction" (24, emphasis his). For Giddens, practical consciousness is fundamentally connected to human agency: "there is a vital sense," he writes, "in which all of us *do* chronically apply phonological and grammatical laws in speech—as well as all sorts of other practical principles of conduct—even though we could not formulate those laws discursively (let alone hold them in mind throughout discourse)" (25, emphasis his). Agency, in this respect, becomes a form of tacit knowledge in which agents—in this case language users—participate in the production and reproduction of dynamic social systems. Repositioning reference and agency within semiotic studies, then, demands for Giddens "abandoning most if not all the oppositions that have been taken over from Saussure: those of *langue/parole*, synchrony/diachrony and signifier/signified" (48). For Giddens, as well as for Soja, conceptualizing the agent's place within social practice demands increased critical awareness of the production of relations—including spatiality, historicity, and sociality—enabling and constraining agency in late capitalism.

In much of his work, including *Postmodern Geographies* and *Thirdspace*, Soja argues for the reassertion of space in critical social theory. Though recent years have seen some renewed attention to the significance of space in social practice (in part due to Soja and his adoption of Henri Lefebvre's complex theories of space and production),

spatiality nevertheless remains largely subordinate to other constitutive or ideological factors, including historicity and sociality:

For much too long, spatiality has been relatively peripheral to what are now called the human sciences, especially among those who approach knowledge formation from a more critical, politically committed perspective. Whether in writing the biography of a particular individual or interpreting a momentous event or simply dealing with our everyday lives, the closely associated historical (or temporal) and social (or sociological) imaginations have always been at the forefront of making practical and informative sense of the subject at hand . . . Although there are significant exceptions, few would deny that understanding the world is, in the most general sense, a simultaneously historical and social project. (*Thirdspace* 2)

Though reasserting spatiality's significance within a "trialectic of being" may seem at first to subordinate historicity and sociality, thus perpetuating the hierarchy the trialectic aims to subvert, what Soja emphasizes continuously is the balanced inter-relationship among the three realms. As he explains, "the three moments of the ontological trialectic thus contain each other; they cannot successfully be understood in isolation or epistemologically privileged separately, although they are all too frequently studied and conceptualized in this way, in compartmentalized disciplines and discourses" (72). Though Soja's emphasis is decidedly less balanced than the trialectic he envisions, his foregrounding of spatiality intends to complicate Marxist and materialist conceptions of production as proceeding solely from a dialectic between sociality and historicity. In Chapter 3, I will discuss in greater detail Soja's understanding of spatiality as a similar trialectic in which three distinct spatialities—perceived (or "real" space), conceived (or "imagined" space), and lived (or "real-and-imagined" space)—collectively produce space within the conditions of late capitalism. For now, however, what I wish to emphasize is the complex "swirl" of production informing rhetorical agents' relations to space insofar

as the trialectics of being both prefigure and directly enable and constrain agentive capacities in rhetorical space.

Though Soja ultimately goes further than Giddens by emphasizing space as a significant component in the production of relations, both theorists share a sense that privileging the symbolic or the imaginary over referentiality or materiality affects in turn how we conceive of subjectivity and agency, particularly in terms of the agent's capacity to identify and resist constitutive ideologies. For both Giddens and Soja, agency remains a social location insofar as the agent necessarily exists and acts within the trialectics of being. As John Ackerman shows in "The Space for Rhetoric in Everyday Life," the production of space may be extended to discussions of rhetorical agency so long as we consider that rhetorical situations have spatial dimensions (85). Ackerman's focus, more specifically, is on Lefebvre's rendering of social space as "both a field of action . . . and a basis of action . . . at once a collection of materials . . . and an ensemble of *materiel* (. . . the procedures necessary to make efficient use)" (qtd. in Ackerman 86). For Ackerman, the rendering of social space constitutes a form of literacy or rhetorical agency since, as Lefebvre argues, "every language is located space. Every discourse says something about space (places or sets of places); and every discourse is emitted from a space" (qtd. in Ackerman 85):

Everyone walks, however unequally, within social geographies (Soja, 1993) that complicate institutions and the discourses that maintain them; these geographies will implicate literacy specialists such as teachers and researchers as much as their students and participants . . . social space is eminently the concern of rhetoricians because our analyses can reveal the tools and discourses that are used to construct locations where people work and play. Rhetorical agency—in social space—depends on the strategic application of a range of representational devices, whether the goal is to continue a given spatial tradition or to sponsor a counter-discourse via a counter-site. (86)

For Ackerman, addressing agency in social space demands a kind of practical consciousness attending to both real and imagined space (or, more accurately, real-and-imagined space). Spaces, he argues, “are both technically and conceptually constructed; they operate as both contexts for discourse, and signs within discourse . . . they are the material product of representational practices that may be redirected and reformed” (86).

Though Ackerman maintains Lefebvre’s term “social space” throughout his essay, we may at this point begin to consider socially produced space rhetorically, as a communicative event complicating traditional notions of the rhetorical situation and its three principal constituents. As Roxanne Mountford argues recently, conceptions of the rhetorical situation—often defined by the presence of exigence, audience, and constraint—tend to “leave out potentially rich and complex dimensions of communication more fully captured by the term *rhetorical space*” (Anson and Dannels 55, emphasis theirs):

Rhetorical space is the geography of a communicative event, and, like all landscapes, may include both the cultural and material arrangement, whether intended or fortuitous, of space. The cultural is the grid across which we measure and interpret space, but also the nexus from which creative minds manipulate material space. The material—a dimension too little theorized by rhetoricians—often has unforeseen influence over a communicative event and cannot always be explained by cultural or creative intent. (qtd. in Anson and Dannels 55)

As Chris Anson and Deanna P. Dannels illustrate, rhetorical space is “both linguistic and contextual; both the words that a preacher utters and the context of a specific pulpit in a particular congregation; both the text of the printed card reading ‘Please do not study in here during lunch hour’ and the college cafeteria tables that give this otherwise uninterpretable message its meaning” (56). In other words, material space affects (or constrains, to use Lloyd Bitzer’s term) communication by situating discourse within a

specific context or reference that in turn influences how we locate and interpret messages emitted from that space. Introducing spatiality into traditional or Bitzerian conceptions of the rhetorical situation, however, means far more than simply extending our understanding of exigence, audience, and constraint. In Bitzer's inaugural description, the rhetorical situation comprises a "complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence" (6). In a move that has been meaningfully contested since his article's 1968 publication, Bitzer defines rhetorical discourse as "com[ing] into existence *as a response* to situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem" (5, emphasis mine). Though by no means a poststructuralist, Bitzer seems prepared to remove from rhetors their intrinsic capacities to invent discourse insofar as invention implies a form of agency whereby rhetors locate among a series of situated *topoi* or commonplaces the available means of persuasion: "the situation controls the rhetorical response," he concludes, "in the same sense that the question controls the answer and the problem controls the solution. Not the rhetor and not the persuasive intent, but the situation is the source and ground of rhetorical activity—and, I should add, of rhetorical criticism" (6). Though Mountford works to complicate Bitzerian models of the rhetorical situation, to suggest in fact that more traditional conceptions of the rhetorical situation tend to ignore the importance and influence of material space, her sense that spatiality matters in the production of communicative events may nevertheless serve to inform such models rather than supplant them. In fact, if conceived of as a field

of relations constituting multiple potentialities or agent functions, agency begins to resemble Bitzer's long-contested description of the rhetorical situation and the potential responses afforded rhetors therein:

The situation dictates the sorts of observations to be made; it dictates the significant physical and verbal responses; and, we must admit, it constrains the words which are uttered in the same sense that it constrains the physical acts of paddling the canoes and throwing the nets. The verbal responses to the demands imposed by this situation are clearly as functional and necessary as the physical responses. (5)

Nevertheless, while Bitzer's description of the rhetorical situation allows for material space to function as a form of constraint, it maintains a primarily socio-historical understanding of communicative events. As Bitzer explains, "the exigence and the complex of persons, objects, events and relations . . . are located in reality, are objective and publicly observable historic facts in the world we experience" (11). As Mountford might suggest, rhetorical theorists risk more than just imbalance when they privilege sociality and historicity over spatiality in rhetorical situations; if, as Lefebvre argues, every discourse is emitted in space and every discourse therefore says something about space, then understanding rhetorical situations requires us to examine as well their spatial dimensions so as to recognize how space contributes to the production and reception of discourse. By conceiving of agency, as Herndl and Licona do, as a kind of social space or *kairos* existing, much like Foucault's power, outside of the rhetorical agent, we may begin to re-vision the rhetorical situation as part of, or perhaps constituted by, Soja's trialectics of being in which spatiality, historicity, and sociality collaborate to produce everyday relations within the ideological conditions of late capitalism.

Chapter Plan

As may be clear already, the term spatiality connotes a wide range of concepts and assumptions, from symbolic discursive spaces to specific material spaces or buildings to local, national, or even global geographies. In order to better situate my discussions of agency within the productions of everyday relations, I will focus specifically on what anthropologist Marc Augé calls non-places, ubiquitous commercial spaces such as airports, malls, supermarkets, automobiles, or even (as I will argue) contemporary college classrooms that are distinguished by their disconnectedness from a shared sense of history, relations, and identities characteristic of anthropological place. For Augé, non-place designates at least two complementary but distinct realities: the utilitarian capacities of commercial spaces—including transport, transit, commerce, leisure, etc.—and the relational capacities available to individuals using these spaces (94). In terms of its utilitarianism, Augé contextualizes non-place within the accelerated conditions of what he calls supermodernity, literally the excess of modernity. In supermodernity, Augé argues, spatial relations are problematized by new information and transportation technologies that have significantly contributed to the dissolution of the nation-state and consequently to the collapsing of distance and distinctiveness among anthropological places. In *The Global Soul*, travel columnist and novelist Pico Iyer captures Augé's understanding of the sensation of displacement and immediacy—the sensation, as Paul Virilio writes, of a “society intensely present here and there at once—in other words, *telepresent to the whole world*” (25)—that so often accompanies our spatial experiences in supermodernity:

What complicates the confusions of the Global Soul is that, as fast as we are moving around the world, the world is moving around us; it is not just the

individual but the globe with which we're interacting that seems to be in constant flux . . . More and more of us may find ourselves in the emotional or metaphysical equivalent of the state we know from railway stations, when we're sitting in a carriage waiting to pull out and can't tell, often, whether we're moving forwards, or the train next to ours is pulling back. (27)

As expressions of supermodernity—or, put differently, of the conditions of late consumer capitalism—non-places offer a specific and familiar example of the production of space and relations within Soja's trialectics of being. Moreover, in terms of agency, non-places serve to constrain the agent functions available to users (travelers, students, etc.); as Augé argues, the user of non-place tends to be “relieved of his usual determinants,” becoming “no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or driver” (103). In this respect, non-places present a complex illustration of agency as a social location, as an external field of relations enabling and constraining agent functions. By situating my discussion of agency in non-place, I hope both to illustrate how agency functions within—and helps to produce—social space and to question the limits and possibilities of action within such carefully contrived spaces.

In the next chapter, therefore, I offer an introduction to the rhetoric of non-place by way of a reading of the international airport terminal as a specific kind of rhetorical space. In this chapter, I introduce the idea of non-place (as developed by Augé), distinguishing it from what he terms anthropological place. More specifically, I situate my analysis of the terminal within recent discussions of subjectivity and rhetorical agency, focusing specifically on Campbell's first axiom of agency as “constituted and constrained.” To frame my analysis, and to illustrate how non-places such as the terminal constrain and enable agency, I present Maurice Charland's theory of constitutive rhetoric as one possible means of examining non-place within the conditions outlined in

Campbell's first axiom. As Charland suggests, rhetorical situations may be better understood as ideological expressions contingent on Kenneth Burke's notion of identification rather than on more traditional understandings of rhetoric as persuasion. Building on Augé's suggestion that non-places tend to produce sensations of solitude and similitude, I argue that such effects rhetorically constitute a particular kind of subject, transitory and de-historicized, similar to Charland's account of the emergence of a *Québécois* national identity following attempts by French Canadian separatists to discursively authenticate a coherent and uniform *Québécois* history and culture. More specific to terminal non-place, I argue that such constitutive rhetorics serve to constrain agency by constituting travelers as transhistorical subjects within the conditions of supermodernity.

My reading of the terminal as a specific form of rhetorical space constituting subjectivities informs much of the chapter that follows. Here, I shift focus away from the quintessential utilitarian spaces expressive of late capitalism to examine the present-day composition classroom as a similar form of non-place. Beginning with a brief discussion of composition's imagined geographies, as Nedra Reynolds calls them, I suggest that the field's long-standing interest in discursive or imaginary spaces tends ultimately to privilege such spaces over real or material spaces, and in particular classroom space. More specifically, I argue that continued emphases on the metaphor of the discourse community in first-year writing courses constitute yet another imagined geography in which the contemporary university becomes a kind of simulacrum, an image of a collaborative and collegial space that may never have existed in the first place. As Bill Readings argues in *The University in Ruins*, the present-day university—with its focus on

performance indicators and markers of professional excellence rather than on the collaborative “search for truth” and the acculturation of national subjects—has itself become an expression of the conditions of late capitalism insofar as its emergence, as he suggests, corresponds to the dissolution of the idea of the nation-state. Based on Readings’ conception of the University of Excellence, I argue that university and classroom space more closely resemble non-places than anthropological places; however, by privileging the discourse community over real or material space, compositionists may unnecessarily perpetuate a disconnect between the imagined geography of the discourse community and the real spatiality or non-place of the writing classroom in the contemporary University of Excellence. In order to reassert agency in classroom non-place, I conclude, composition pedagogies should maintain a difficult balance within what Soja calls the trialectics of spatiality in which real and imagined spaces converge to produce lived space, or—as he more often terms it—real-and-imagined space. Whether through renewed attention to the cultural conditions of everyday life, as Geoffrey Sirc argues, or more specifically to community-based inquiry, as Kevin Ball suggests, attending to real-and-imagined space in the first-year composition course may offer rhetorical theory and pedagogy an initial methodology for the reassertion of agents and agency in non-place.

Chapter 2

Terminal Space: Rhetorical Agency and Constitutive Rhetorics in Non-Place

Airports are tricky places, Mr. Navorski.
The Terminal (2004)

In the recent Steven Spielberg film *The Terminal*, a literally de-nationalized traveler, Viktor Navorski (Tom Hanks), must find a way to inhabit—to make a home of—the anonymous and commercialized sterility of John F. Kennedy International’s sprawling terminal. In the film’s opening scene, Navorski makes his way through Kennedy’s agonizingly slow customs line, waiting patiently to have his passport stamped, for his official approval to enter the United States. When he finally arrives at the customs booth, however, Navorski learns that, sometime during his transnational flight from the fictionalized eastern European Republic of Krakozhia to New York, a coup occurred in which malcontent military officials succeeded in overthrowing the sitting democratic president and his cabinet.

For Navorski, the problem here is one of recognition; because the United States State Department remains unwilling to officially recognize Krakozhia’s new military regime, it—by some obscure extension—similarly refuses to recognize Navorski’s status as a Krakozhian. So, neither a Krakozhian nor an American, Navorski is, as one customs official aptly puts it, “a resident of nowhere.” Unable to return to Krakozhia due to a temporary travel restriction, but unable as well to enter the United States as a documented and legal alien, Navorski remains confined to the international terminal, that peculiar and ubiquitous transit space that exists somewhere *between* nation-states, somewhere (or

nowhere) between his homeland half-a-world away and the metropolis whose spires are barely visible through the terminal's glassy observation points and deceptively revolving doors.

As Spielberg's sometimes farcical film illustrates, spaces such as the international airport terminal have become important players in the production of consumer business and culture within the conditions of late capitalism or, to use Marc Augé's preferred term, supermodernity.⁶ As utilitarian spaces enabling commercial transit and human interaction, terminals contribute significantly to the daily production of global commerce in which national and cultural borders literally and symbolically dissolve amid an increasingly complex network of de-nationalized spaces (dis)connecting disparate geographies. And as with other cultural and architectural productions within late capitalism—from the range and influence of Hollywood studios on foreign film production to the (re)emergence of a neo-international architectural style that imitates and reproduces designs from one city to the next—terminals may be understood as the hyperbolic embodiments of political and economic practices of production that have, as Pico Iyer and many others have argued, helped to homogenize and de-historicize national, cultural, and spatial difference. The modern airport, Iyer observes, “is based on

⁶ In *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson observes that the term “late capitalism,” as it is often used today in Marxist and post-Marxist criticism, designates a continuation rather than a break from other forms of capitalism. Working from Ernst Mandel's book *Late Capitalism*, Jameson suggests that late capitalism functions today as the extension of earlier stages of capitalism, including market capitalism and the more imperialist monopoly stage (35). Extending from these initial stages, he argues, is late capitalism whose “features include the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges . . . new forms of media interrelationship . . . computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale” (xix). Though Jameson and Augé disagree on several key features of late capitalism/postmodernism and supermodernity, their recognitions of the contributions of information and transportation technologies to the expansion of multinational capitalism connect in several ways, some of which I will discuss later in this thesis. With these similarities in mind, I use the two terms to connote similar social, political, and cultural features constraining and enabling relations in non-places.

the assumption that everyone's from somewhere else, and so in need of something he can recognize to make him feel at home; it becomes, therefore, an anthology of generic spaces—the shopping mall, the food court, the hotel lobby—which bear the same relation to life, perhaps, that Muzak does to music" (43). Consequently, in the totalizing environment of the terminal, the traveler's relation to space—that is his/her experience in terminal space—typically varies little if at all. Whether in Tokyo, Montreal, London, or Jerusalem, the traveler acculturated in the learned practices of migration—practices which, as the Krakozhian-speaking Navorski illustrates in his skilled maneuverings through Kennedy's cavernous transportation and retail space, transcend national languages and well as spatialities—is able to successfully navigate terminal space by decoding the generalized—or internationalized—logic comprising the building's spatial rhetoric. As Andrew Wood suggests about the traveler's totalizing experience in the terminal space, "Wherever you go, there you are" (325).

Given their significance as transitory and transactional intersections in the increasingly networked conditions of late consumer capitalism—what Raka Shome describes as a period in which "similarities of identity positions are being produced across diverse spatial contexts in disparate regions across the globe" (qtd. in Wood 326)—terminals offer contemporary rhetorical theorists a rich and expansive text from which to examine, at a relatively "local" level, the broader constitutive effects of the "totalizing globalism of late modern capitalism" (326). As John Ackerman suggests, rhetoric's academic legacy tends to privilege "texts over spaces and schools over cities" (85), a practice that consequently ignores how materiality and spatiality contribute rhetorically to the production of relations in everyday life. As I suggest in the previous

chapter, rhetoric's conceptualizations of spatiality may be usefully complicated by addressing the production of relations, including agency, as involving a trialectic of convergences and interrelationships including spatiality, historicity, and sociality. Moreover, I argued that by understanding rhetorical situations as spatially located, as Roxanne Mountford suggests, we might begin to recognize the importance of spatiality in communicative events. In this chapter, I wish to develop these concepts further by addressing the possibilities for agency—which, as Herndl and Licona argue, exists as a social space enabling and constraining forms of intervention—in the rhetorical space of the generic and ubiquitous international airport terminal.

Though symbolic, historic, and monumental places have achieved some attention within interdisciplinary literatures,⁷ social and rhetorical research tends to ignore “the banal, commonplace, and seemingly invisible architecture of public life” (Wood 327). With its ability to critically evaluate complex discursive practices and constitutive ideologies, rhetorical theory offers studies of everyday space a valuable means of inquiry uniquely adaptive to an understanding of space as an assembly of various communicative effects. As a kind of “performance-architecture” (327) embodying the accelerated velocities of late capitalism or supermodernity—including information and transportation technologies—the terminal offers rhetorical theorists an everyday illustration of constitutive agency—Campbell's first axiom—as what Herndl and Licona might describe as “a field of relations,” suggesting a complex rhetorical space (involving multiple fields of address and reception) enabling and constraining agents via “a social/semiotic intersection that offers only a potential for action, an opportunity” (Herndl and Licona

⁷ In an essay on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Carol Blair, Marsha Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci argue that reading the Memorial as a postmodern commemorative text “firmly establishes the political character of the Memorial's rhetoric, and helps to explain its peculiar power to evoke response” (264).

13). Agency, in this view, “exceeds the subject” insofar as it “brings that agent into being as an agent” or, in Foucaultian terms, as an “agent function” (13-14).

In this chapter, therefore, I hope to extend the range and potential of contemporary rhetorical theories of agency by spatially locating it as a field of relations constituting agent functions within terminal non-place. For Herndl and Licona, the agent function, existing as a social location outside of the subject or agent,⁸ parallels Michel Foucault’s author function which, as they suggest, “often acts as a principle of thrift, constraining discourse and action and maintaining social practices” (16). Connecting the author function to authority insofar as authority exists as “a social identity that is occupied by a concrete individual but emerges from a set of social practices” (15), Herndl and Licona suggest that such practices serve both to represent and reproduce “dominant rhetorical and social relations,” in effect limiting “the proliferation of meaning and action” and constraining agentic capacity (17). If, as Herndl and Licona suggest, agency exists as a social location bringing agents into being, then addressing agency as a field of relations within specific social locations may begin to rebalance rhetoric’s understanding of agency as equally involving spatiality, historicity, and sociality. With this goal in mind, I present the terminal here as the spatial exemplar of what anthropologist Augé calls “non-places,” those omnipresent supermodern spaces—such as malls, fast food restaurants, grocery stores, automobiles, highway service stations, etc.—whose architectural and ideological uniformity affects travelers by isolating and collectivizing relations and identities. Building on Campbell’s understanding of agency as constituted and constrained by external or contextual forces, I argue that terminal non-places, by

⁸ Distinguishing the subject from the agent in much the same way as Paul Smith, Herndl and Licona view the subject as constituted but unreflective; the agent, however, through its articulation into the agent function (14), retains the opportunity to “speak with authority and act with a potential for change” (24).

evoking the paradoxical sensations of “solitude and similitude” (Augé 103), constrain agency by recruiting travelers as transhistorical subjects in a travel narrative that, as Maurice Charland suggests, “‘always already’ presumes the constitution of subjects” (134). Whether through collectivization or isolation, terminals constrain agency by maintaining procedures of discursive exclusion which, as Foucault argues in “The Order of Discourse,” “binds individuals to certain types of enunciation and consequently forbids them all others” (221). To better understand agency in terminal non-place, I conclude, rhetoricians might—as Anthony Giddens suggests—(re)conceptualize agency as both enabling and constraining relations in systems of integration. In this sense, I argue, we may usefully complicate totalizing theories of subjectivity—including Charland’s, to some extent—by positing a conception of the subject, or rather agent, as integral to the production and reproduction of social spaces in supermodernity.

Place, Non-Place, and Terminal Space

In recent times . . . airports have become something more than just an intranational convenience zone, and it is easy to see them as models of our future. So often we find ourselves in their accommodating, anonymous spaces, surrounded by the familiar totems of The Body Shop, The Nature Company, the Sharper Image—the impersonal successors to the family names of old—while a man taps away at a laptop beside us and another mutters into his cell phone: “If there’s no emotion in it, it’s just a business decision...” The air is conditioned and the plants are false.

Pico Iyer (43)

In his 1992 ethnographic study of the identificatory and historical relations constituted in so-called non-place, Marc Augé identifies several spatial and relational characteristics that distinguish place from non-place. Though Augé takes care to resist

fixed and exclusionary categories, suggesting at various points that place and non-place have the potential to intersect within any given space, he nevertheless establishes clear differences between the two in terms of spatiality and inhabitability. In “anthropological place,” he argues, space serves as a means of discovery “by those who claim it as their own” (43). In such inhabitable places—including homes, villages, and other “places of identity . . . relations . . . and history” (52)—stability maintains and sustains lasting relations to space such that “to be born [in an anthropological place] is to be born in a place, to be ‘assigned to residence’” (53). As places of shared identities, relations, and histories, anthropological places promote a communal or collective relationship to inherited geography, an act of placemaking that often develops from inhabitants’ physical and spiritual connectedness to place:

The place held in common by the ethnologist and those he talks about is simply a place: the one occupied by the indigenous inhabitants who live in it, cultivate it, defend it, mark its strong points and keep its frontiers under surveillance, but who also detect in it the traces of chthonian or celestial powers, ancestors of spirits which populate and animate its private geography. (42)

For Augé, who aims in his work to inaugurate an anthropology of urban experience, town and city centers represent some of the few remaining examples of anthropological place in the developed world. Bringing together religious, historical, and cultural monuments in a single public space, the urban center alludes to the past but at the same time allows for the (re)organization of intersectional and communicative relations and identifications, where, Augé argues, “individual itineraries can intersect and mingle, where a few words are exchanged and solitudes momentarily forgotten, on the church steps, in front of the town hall, at the café counter or in the baker’s doorway” (66-7).

If the centralized village piazza represents a historicized place, then the terminal space represents its (at least partial) negation, a de-historicized non-place. As Augé explains, “the word ‘non-place’ designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces” (94). Unlike anthropological places, which as Grant Boswell observes “integrate the new and the old such that both become familiar in the same space,” non-places such the international airport terminal express the conditions of what Augé calls supermodernity. Unlike postmodernity in which there is “a collapse of an idea of progress” (Augé 30) through a general fragmentation and diffusion of meaning, supermodernity suggests the “overabundance of events in the contemporary world” (31) corresponding to the accelerated velocities of information and transportation technologies enabling production within global consumer capitalism:

What is new is not that the world lacks meaning, or has little meaning, or less than it used to have; it is that we seem to feel an explicit and intense daily need to give it meaning: to give meaning to the world, not just some village or lineage. This need to give a meaning to the present, if not the past, is the price we pay for the overabundance of events corresponding to a situation we would call ‘supermodern’ to express its essential quality: excess. (29)

For Augé, the excess of space within the conditions of supermodernity is paradoxically “correlative with the shrinking of the planet” related to the collapsing of space as a result of rapid advances in information and transportation technologies. Expressing this sensation, Paul Virilio ponders the consequences of living when “there is no more *here* and *now* if everything is *now*,” when instantaneous connectivity, such as teleconferencing, over once expansive geographic space creates the perception of a “*transparent horizon* of a screen that suddenly opens up a kind of temporal window for us to interact elsewhere, often a long way away” (37, *emphases his*). Thus, in non-place,

users (distinguished at this point from the *inhabitants* of anthropological place) become, like Viktor Navorski, residents of nowhere and—as Virilio might add—everywhere.

Though supermodernity produces excesses of time as well as space, in the generic spatiality of non-place, history—that is, travelers’ relations to national, local, and personal histories embodied in specific geographies—is nevertheless excavated, or at least significantly diminished, in the “dreary and institutional style of endless corridors and lines of chairs [that sometimes] give way to broad sunny expanses and towering glass” (Wood 329): whereas “‘anthropological place’ is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the unformulated rules of living know-how; non-place creates the shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drivers” (Augé 101). In non-places such as the terminal, mall, supermarket, or highway service station, space and relations to space are homogenized so that anyone practiced in the reading of these particular spatial discourses can utilize the space with little or no interpretive trouble. As Augé and Wood suggest, the familiarity and consistency of non-place—such that travelers have no reason to know (or care) that they are “in” Chicago when they catch a connecting flight to St. Louis—ultimately affect travelers’ relations to space and identity by “render[ing] the difference between ‘here’ and ‘there’ meaningless” (Wood 329).

In terminal space, which for Augé epitomizes the transitory and de-historicized rhetoric of non-place, the collective and individual practices of anthropological placemaking seem less possible, and indeed significantly constrained, insofar as the terminal serves instead to amplify the traveler’s solitariness by putting him/her “in contact only with another image of himself” (79):

After all, in the biosphere of the terminal, you don't really need anything—not even the connections that make you human. For those you have your carry-on laptop and cellphone: placeless terminals within a placeless terminal, allowing you to travel the world without leaving the familiar touch of plastic. (Leland 14)

Whereas anthropological place represents an attempt to collectivize a shared sense of place and identity, non-place reflects a diffusion of security, both in terms of space and historicized identity. Within the conditions of supermodernity, space “serves as a substitute for the universes which ethnology has traditionally made it own” (Augé 32).

The non-place of the airport, as Thomas Hylland Erikson and Runar Døving argued at a 1992 conference on the consequences of globalization for social anthropology, is therefore “qualitatively different from any local community”:

It is not constructed as a permanent, self-reproducing social system. It is marked by transience. Unlike say, a large ship or prison, the airport cannot be seen as a “microcosm.” Its main users, the passengers, pass through. Although the personnel taking in and reproducing the airport as a social system is being completely replaced every few hours . . . the kinds of interaction taking place are identical from hour to hour, from day to day. It is predictable.

In an era in which “rapid means of transportation have brought any capital within a few hours' travel of any other” (Augé 31), anthropological places are not so much replaced by non-places as they are simply bypassed or glimpsed en route to other places or non-places. While driving to the airport, mall, or supermarket, for instance, the traveler likely passes through or near anthropological places such as villages, public plazas, or parks without ever experiencing them as places. Thus, as Grant Boswell suggests, “non-places minimize the familiar, the known, the recognizable; they suspend identity, relations, and history,” making them “only marginally significant.” Displaced from the sense of connectivity characteristic of anthropological place, travelers in non-place experience both an isolation and homogenization of individual and group identity. In the vast airport

terminal, where travelers are paradoxically unified in their shared solitariness, neither singular identity nor social relations are created, “only solitude, and similitude” (Augé 103).

Non-Place as Rhetorical Space

The community of human destinies is experienced in the
anonymity of non-place, and in solitude.
Marc Augé (120)

In *Postmodern Geographies*, Edward W. Soja suggests that spatiality involves more than just the “abstracted physical form” of a particular physical context or environment (79). Space in itself, he argues, “may be primordially given, but the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience” (79-80). In this view, space assumes an important rhetorical role in what Soja calls the socio-spatial dialectic where “socially concretized spatiality arising from the application of purposeful human labour . . . becomes the geographical subject and object of historical materialist analysis, of a materialist interpretation of spatiality” (80). In large part, the socio-spatial dialectic, as it appears in *Postmodern Geographies*, serves as a critique of historical materialism which, though highly influential in reshaping “liberal social philosophy” in order to better understand the production of relations in capitalist systems, nevertheless “occluded, devalued, and depoliticized space as an object of critical social discourse” (4). “A direct critique of historicism,” he adds, “is a necessary step forward in this spatialization of critical thought and political action” (6).

In *Thirdspace*, however, Soja revisits the socio-spatial dialectic and its significance in the production of relations, noting that the dialectical relationship he

observed between spatiality and sociality, by virtue of their (re)producing one another over time, “is also intrinsically historical” (72). In place of his initial dialectic, therefore, Soja—again working from Lefebvre—proposes a trialectic generating “three ontological fields of knowledge formation” that function concomitantly and consequently cannot be understood in isolation or “epistemologically privileged separately” (72). For Soja, then, “the assertion of Spatiality opens the Historicity and Sociality of human lifeworlds to interpretations and knowledges that many of its most disciplined observers never imagined, while simultaneously maintaining the rich insights they provide for understanding the production of lived space” (72). When one term is privileged over the others—as is often the case with historicity—the complexities informing the production of relations flatten or diminish into what Lefebvre calls “transparency,” an “intuitive way of thinking” that “prevents us from seeing the social construction of affective geographies” (*Postmodern* 7). In Heideggerian terms, therefore, “being-in-the-world . . . is existentially definable as being simultaneously historical, social, and spatial. We are first and always historical-social-spatial beings, actively participating individually and collectively in the construction/production—the ‘becoming’—of histories, geographies, societies” (*Thirdspace* 73). In terms of agency, Soja’s notion of the trialectics of being as constituting our relations and productions within late capitalism parallels Herndl and Licona’s sense of agency as a field of relations enabling and constraining specific agent functions insofar as both conceptions maintain, to admittedly varying degrees, spatial, historical, and social factors as instrumental to the capacity to act within such conditions.

In much of his work, Soja perceives the postmodern urban landscape as a complex articulation of constitutive ideologies, including state politics and corporate

capitalism. Quoting Lefebvre, Soja suggests the impossibility of separating space from ideology and politics:

If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be ‘purely’ formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies. (*Postmodern*, qtd. in Soja 80)

For Lefebvre, capitalism succeeds, despite its many internal contradictions, by “achieving ‘growth,’ . . . *by occupying space, by producing a space*” (qtd. in Soja 91, emphasis Lefebvre’s). The survival of capitalism, Soja and Lefebvre believe, depends on the “production and occupation of a fragmented, homogenized, and hierarchically structured space” (92). The control of spatial relations, therefore, remains critical to the survival of capitalism insofar as space extends the reach and influence of corporate and state apparatuses. Dialectically, space offers capitalism a vehicle to express and perpetuate subjectivities while at the same time securing additional means of production, either at local or multinational levels.

Expressive of the trialectics of being within supermodernity, terminal non-places suggest specific rhetorical spaces wherein instrumental and constitutive factors—including cultural and material arrangements—cooperate to produce the “geography of a communicative event.” Serving as the material spatiality moving and directing travelers through a complex network of sky-ways, escalators, busses, and trams, but also as the discursive embodiment of dominant ideological discourses establishing and sustaining production within late capitalism, the terminal presents a complex and highly visible “interface between the global and the local . . . mediated by the market and shared

notions of prestige and symbols of power” (Eriksen and Døving). The terminal, in this sense, metonymically stands in for the range and power of international commerce. From the homogenization of architectural designs to recent efforts to lease large portions to national and international retailers (part of the so-called “mall of America”), modern terminals serve to “recruit” travelers (in the Althusserian sense) into specific agent functions, positions always already enabled and constrained by the constitutive rhetorics (re)producing terminal non-place.

Put simply, in non-place subjugation is ultimately the order of the day. As Foucault’s account of the power of discourse to secure allegiances and perpetuate class hierarchies suggests, “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality” (“Discourse” 210). Not simply one-directional, discourse requires fields of address *and* reception, converging and diverging at given moments (and spaces) in time. As a powerful and significant tool in the processes of identification and socialization, discourse has the ability to constrain relations, even to the point where anonymity, such as that often experienced in the terminal space, is falsely perceived by the traveler as a kind of liberation (Augé 101). To occupy terminal space, therefore—“to be urbanized,” as Soja argues—“still means to adhere, to be made an adherent, a believer in a specified collective ideology rooted in extensions of *polis* (politics, policy, polity, police) and *civitas* (civil, civic, citizen, civilian, civilization)” (234-35). Put differently, to be made an adherent—to be made a consumer—in terminal space means to have little or no control over the production of spatial discourse. In the

terminal, discourse serves to constitute subjectivities by directing remarks, instructions, and technologies specifically to consumer travelers:

All the remarks that emanate from our roads and commercial centers, from the street corner sites of the vanguard of the banking system . . . are addressed simultaneously and indiscriminately to each and any of us: they fabricate the ‘average man,’ defined as the user of the road, retail or banking system. (Augé 100)

Whether through instructional discourse (“Take right-hand lane”), prescriptive discourse (“No smoking”), informative discourse (“You are now entering the Beaujolais region”), or consumer discourse (“Rent DVDs here, return anywhere”) (Augé 96, Wood 332), terminals shape travelers’ relations to space by rhetorically constituting spatial experiences where, as Augé suggests, identities are both collectivized and singularized.

As suggested above, the terminal may be understood as a specific form of non-place, conceptualized by Augé as the constraining of the identificatory and historical relations associated with anthropological place. Within non-place, he suggests, users experience space in the “urgency of the present moment” (104)—that is, within the accelerated conditions of supermodernity—suggesting the potential to view and critique non-place as rhetorical space, as a communicative event producing relations within the trialectics of being. In the remainder of this chapter, I focus specifically on Augé’s suggestion that non-places adversely affect travelers by constituting a scene of competing relations in which the principal sensations experienced are solitude and similitude. These paradoxical sensations—later collapsed by Augé into a single term: shared solitudes⁹—correspond to “an experience—without real historical precedent—of solitary individuality combined with non-human mediation . . . between the individual and the public authority” (Augé 118). Through the constituted sensations of shared solitudes, I

⁹ See Augé’s *In the Metro*. Trans. Tom Conely. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2002.

argue, terminal non-place manages relations by constraining rhetorical agency and agent functions to largely uniform expressions, constituting transhistorical consumer subjects within ideological discourses expressive of late capitalism. In this sense, the agent functions available to the users of non-place are limited, particularly when we consider agency as a set of capacities available to travelers who “move into and out of agentive spaces as a result of the kairotic collocation of multiple relations and conditions” (Herndl and Licona 23). Illustrating and building on Campbell’s conception of constitutive agency, I argue that while terminal space serves to discursively recruit travelers as consumer subjects in a constitutive narrative that always already presumes the constitution of consumer subjects, it may as well allow for agency insofar as the subject constituted in non-place maintains—despite the relatively limited agent functions present in the terminal’s field of relations—an integral position in the space’s (re)production of relations.

Rhetorical Agency and Non-Place

Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power.

Michel Foucault (“Space” 252)

As suggested above, non-places have the potential to constrain agency such that users retain only limited capacities or agent functions within the space’s dominant modes of address. In whatever form it takes, ideology contributes to the production of terminal space within the trialectics of being by facilitating a field of relations in which dominant ideologies “are reproduced in a concretized and created spatiality that has been progressively ‘occupied’ by an advancing capitalism, fragmented into parcels,

homogenized into discrete commodities, organized into locations of control, and extended to the global scale” (Soja, *Postmodern* 92). Though perhaps not read as such by the thousands of people who move through these transitory spaces every day, the spatial discourses and ideologies (re)producing terminal space nevertheless call for travelers’ adherence to specific cultural codes expressive of late consumer capitalism.¹⁰

These spaces are overlaid with sign systems deriving from consumer retailing and mass marketing. Here the airport space has been transformed into a type of shopping mall. As such, the interior built environment intersects with the consumer culture propagated in mass media advertising and commercial marketing with its cornucopia of signs and sign systems. (Gottdiener 97, emphasis his)

From the emergence of themed restaurants, full-scale retail malls, and even slot machines within airport space, modern terminals do far more than serve as contact points enabling networked commercial transit: more often they participate directly in the global consumer culture they at one time initiated.

Consequently, the traveler immersed in the non-place of the terminal is confronted by an increasingly eclectic commercial space allowing for a paradoxically narrow range of actions and agent functions, limited principally to that of the consumer—to paraphrase Viktor Navorski’s befriended customs agent, there are two things you can do in terminal space: wait and shop. For Herndl and Licona—whose notion of agency exists at the intersection of various relational practices, including semiotic and material elements—this narrowing of agentive capacities might suggest a form of constrained agency “that emerges as a result of the relationship between agentive opportunities and the regulatory power of authority” (20). Similarly, as Augé suggests of the constitutive

¹⁰ Frederic Jameson suggests that postmodern art and architecture’s emphases on indeterminacy and pastiche are not so much counter-aesthetics to dominant discourses as they are expressions of the cultural logic of late capitalism.

effects of non-place and, we might add, the narrowing of agentive capacity, the constraints informing the production of non-place invite the adoption of specific roles or agent functions. These roles, Augé argues, become transhistorical—constituted within non-place’s eternal present—insofar as the person entering the accelerated velocities of non-place leaves behind his/her “usual determinants” established in anthropological place, his/her identity, relations, and history (52) which serve there as references for those who communally and individually *produce space* rather than *consume it*:

[A] person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or driver. Perhaps he is still weighed down by the previous day’s worries, the next day’s concerns; but he is distanced from them temporarily by the environment of the moment. Subjected to a gentle form of possession, to which he surrenders himself with more or less talent or conviction, he tastes for a while—like anyone who is possessed—the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing. (103)

Like many of Augé’s readings of non-place, this passage suggests several paradoxical effects constituting users’ relations to non-place, namely the *passive joy* of identity-loss we experience when we are subjected to the space’s *gentle form of possession*. For Augé, paradox seems to uniquely embody the cultural logic of supermodernity in much the same way as pastiche embodies for Jameson the cultural logic of postmodernism or late capitalism. In either case, however, an apparent disconnect appears between the logic of anthropological place—in which the “discourses uttered in it” (81) contribute to productions of meaning that are collaborative insofar as they depend upon a series of shared identities, relations, and histories—and the “depthless” hyperspatial rhetoric of non-place.

In his discussion of rhetoric’s need to address “the historical and material attributes of social space and everyday life,” Ackerman presents a (re)conception of

rhetorical agency that includes, in addition to the capacity to speak or write, “the production and maintenance of social space” (85). For the traveler confronted by the terminal’s various constitutive discourses, the question becomes then, to what extent does spatial discourse enable one’s capacity to produce and maintain social space? Or, put differently, to what extent does spatial discourse permit intervention or oppositional consciousness? With the rise and influence of poststructuralist and postmodernist thought, in which identities are often theorized as coterminous with omnipresent social institutions such as language and ideology, the premise that individuals retain such capabilities remains hotly contested. As I suggest in the previous chapter, debates concerning agency after and within the postmodern condition tend to settle on both/and conceptions of agency, acknowledging discourse’s capacity to constitute subjectivities but at the same time permitting the individual some agency, that is some capacity to resist institutionalized subordination via the (re)production of transgressive discourse.

In terms of non-place, the constitutive potential of rhetorical agency described by Campbell and more fully developed by Herndl and Licona may help explain the complex field of relations producing and transforming the structure of organized space (Soja, *Postmodern* 78). As Soja and Lefebvre suggest, space is directly linked to the production of dominant discourses through “processes whereby the capitalist system as a whole is able to extend its existence by maintaining its defining structures” (91). For Soja, however, resisting constitutive discourse is still possible so long as those constrained by capitalism’s production of “homogenized” and “hierarchically structured space . . . focus upon the vulnerable point: the production of space, the territorial structure of exploitation and domination, the spatially controlled reproduction of the system as a whole” (92). In

part, the oppositional consciousness alluded to here suggests a methodology of de-mystification analogous to Marx's famous metaphor of the *camera obscura* in which reality is obfuscated through the distorting lens of false consciousness. As Smith observes, if the Marxian subject "continues to be seen as a matter of false consciousness, in which the 'truth' of the real is both that it is 'empirically verifiable' *and* that it is hidden beneath existing conditions, an argument must be made to indicate the conditions of possibility for the raising of the subjective blinds" (13, emphasis his). In other words, for Marx, contesting false consciousness first and foremost requires us to reveal what has been concealed, or more appropriately, to restore what has been distorted. Though this reading is tempting insofar as it suggests consciousness as the principal enabler of agentic capacity in late capitalism, it nevertheless oversimplifies (as many post-Marxist theorists have argued) the scope and prevalence of ideologies within complex social and political systems. In the following section, therefore, I focus my discussion of the constitutive rhetorics of non-place on Maurice Charland's adoption of Althusser's theories of subjectivity and interpellation, which I argue contribute to the production of terminal space as a field of relations governing travelers' agentic capacities through narrowly available agent functions, or—as Althusser prefers—subject positions.¹¹ Examining the constitutive sensations of shared solitudes in terms of rhetorical agency, I suggest, positions these relations within the trialectics of being, therefore suggesting non-

¹¹ Though the agent function described by Herndl and Licona shares several characteristics with Althusser's subject position, it nevertheless connotes an active role within the production and reproduction of social spaces; in Althusser's subject position, however, subjectivity is largely constrained to the receptivity and appropriation of dominant ideologies. As Herndl and Licona suggest, "the agent function or author function (re)produce the practices for the subject to speak with authority and act with a potential for change" (24).

place as a specific form of constitutive agency narrowing the potentiality of inhabitable agent functions always already constituted within the terminal's field of relations.

Shared Solitudes: Terminal Space as Constitutive Agency

The resistance of distances having ceased, the lost world
will send us back to our solitude, a multiple solitude of
some billions of individuals whom the multimedia are
preparing to organize in quasi-cybernetic fashion.
Paul Virilio (128)

In Foucaultian terms, the constraining of agency in non-place suggests a system of exclusion whereby discourse serves to perpetually displace agents routinely subjected to its power (212). The diminished capacity to act, resist, or intervene in non-place, or put differently to access and produce discourse controlled by ideological discourses or apparatuses, suggests a process of interpellation at work within terminal space in which travelers are “hailed” or “recruited” into specific subject positions or, as I will argue, agent functions.

In Althusser's famous description of interpellation, ideological discourse recruits or transforms individuals into subjects “by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’” (174). According to Althusser, the individual becomes a subject in the moment he/she recognizes “that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him, and that ‘it was really him who was hailed’ (and not someone else)” (174). In terminal space, this form of ideological address may be observed in the airport's numerous prescriptive signs specifically targeting each and every traveler—“No smoking,” “No parking,” “Keep baggage in sight at all times”—as

well as in the ideological qualities of the space itself, its capacity to interpellate travelers as consumer subjects within the accelerated conditions of supermodernity.

Complicating Bitzerian conceptions of audience as “capable being influenced by [rhetorical] discourse and of being mediators of change” (Bitzer 8), theories of constitutive rhetoric begin with the assumption that “the very existence of social subjects (who would become audience members) is already a rhetorical effect” (Charland 133). Building on Althusser and on Michael McGee’s works on the formative effects of ideological discourse, Charland’s influential theory of constitutive rhetoric suggests that subjects are “collectivized” as a people through a “process of identification in rhetorical narratives that ‘always already’ presume the constitution of subjects” (134). Part of what Charland calls the “rhetoric of socialization,” the process of interpellation recruits subjects to identify with—to inhabit—already established subject positions “in order to be part of the audience of a rhetorical situation in which persuasion could occur” (138). The rhetoric of socialization, he suggests, prefigures more traditional understandings of persuasive discourse—including Bitzerian conceptions of the rhetorical situation—by constructing *personae* that only later form the basis of rhetorical appeals (139).

In the construction of *personae*, narratives complete the process of interpellation by recruiting subjects to position themselves as agents in a narrativized history. Ideological narratives—such as the Quebec government’s White Paper, which aimed to constitute a national *Québécois* identity so as to legitimize the proposed Referendum on Quebec sovereignty—are particularly effective in constituting subjectivities insofar as they provide subjects a deceptively coherent identity within an already established collectivity:

Narratives lead us to construct and fill in coherent unified subjects out of temporally and spatially separate events. This renders the site of action and experience stable. The locus of yesterday's acts becomes that of today's. Consequently, narratives offer a world in which human agency is possible and acts can be meaningful. (Charland 139)

For Charland, however, such human agency is ultimately an illusion, at least in terms of the subject's ability to control the production of discourse and to resist subjectivity.

Nevertheless, the narrative "assert[s] the existence of a collective subject, the protagonist of the historical drama, who experiences, suffers, and acts" (139). For Charland, the act of constituting collective identities within expansive narratives collapses time, an ideological effect that often results in "the positing of a transhistorical subject" (140). In the case of the White Paper, he notes, "ancestry is offered as the concrete link between the French settlers of North America, those in Quebec today, and a collectivity. Time is collapsed as narrative identification occurs" (140).¹²

The rendering of a collective "*Québécois*" identity within the White Paper, however, does not—at least for Charland—free the subject to the agentive capacities suggested in the constitutive narrative. Rather, he argues, "subjects within narratives are not free, they are *positioned* and so constrained" (140, emphasis his). In place of his understanding of "human agency," Charland substitutes "narrative probability" as "a formal and ideological constraint upon the subject's possibilities of being" within the

¹² Similar to McGee's understanding of "the people," Charland's conception of the *peuple Québécois* necessarily implies a unity, a collective (and relatively homogenous) group identity constituted through narrative and discourse. Understandably, Charland sees this unity as an agentive constraint, at least insofar as the construction of such unities flattens difference, both spatially and temporally. As we work to fashion an effective theory of agency after and within constitutive ideology, however, it may be useful to reconceive constitutive identities—national, racial, gender, etc.—as *singularities* functioning within a larger, and decidedly less cohesive, multitude. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri explain, "a multitude is an irreducible multiplicity; the singular social differences that constitute the multitude must always be expressed and can never be flattened into sameness, unity, identity, or indifference" (*Multitude* 106). The multitude, they believe, maintains agency—often in the form of liberation movements directed against globalization, or Empire as they term it—"by their singular emergence, by the intensity that characterizes them one by one. In short, this new phase is defined by the fact that these struggles do not link horizontally, but each one leaps vertically, directly to the virtual center of Empire" (*Empire* 58).

constitutive narrative. “To be constituted as a subject in a narrative,” he concludes, “is to be constituted with a history, motives, a *telos*” and possibly even as an “agent,” “capable of acting freely in the world” (140). Ideological narratives such as the one suggested in the White Paper are powerful (and often effective) because they establish tautological relationships between past and present subjects; as Charland argues, constitutive rhetorics homogenize subjects by suggesting the existence of a collective agent “that transcends the limitations of individuality at any historical moment and transcends the death of individuals across history” (140). Though Charland’s conception of agency is very much rooted in the liberal-humanist tradition in which the capacity to act is intrinsic to individuals—subjects, he suggests, maintain only the illusion of agency within constitutive rhetorics—his sense that discourses and ideologies constitute subjects by recruiting them within constitutive narratives that always already presume the constitution of subjects nevertheless parallels, in several ways, the articulation of specific agent functions within constitutive agency’s field of relations. In this sense, we may begin to conceptualize agency within non-place—as Campbell and Herndl and Licona might suggest—as constrained agency expressive of the constitutive rhetorics of supermodernity’s de-historicized non-places.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau directly connects narrative and space by suggesting that stories “traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them” (115). “Every story,” he writes, “is a travel story—a spatial practice” (116). In terminal space, Wood similarly notes, travel and narrative are most directly linked: “When one explores terminal space, one discovers an interconnected matrix of hotel shuttles, atrium lobbies, elevated

walkways, food courts, theme restaurants, and enclosed malls that permit one to read [the terminal] as a coherent narrative” (327). In terminal space, the travel narrative traversing and organizing space is one in which movement ultimately overshadows destination. However, unlike Charland’s *Québécois* narrative in which the task of narrative closure is left to constituted subjects—“It is up to the *Québécois* of 1980,” he writes, “to conclude the story to which they are identified” (143)—the terminal’s constitutive narrative, as expressive of late capitalism, cannot be teleological; much like the traveler hurrying through the vast terminal space, consumer capitalism exceeds narrative closure by presenting itself as transhistorical (or, to use Marx’s terms, “natural” and “eternal”), as capable of moving swiftly through and among various transnational marketplaces. Similarly, in terminal space, “design and practice conspire to communicate the same message: Be comfortable—keep moving” (Wood 333). Such unending movement provides the terminal its palpable insistence on currency and urgency. The omnipresence of prescriptive discourses contributes to these effects by positing a transhistorical traveler, a coherent and unified consumer constituted by the terminal’s ideological travel narrative in which the production and maintenance of space comprises the narrative’s principal agent function. In the “repetitive and modular” (329) environment of the terminal, prescriptive discourse itself becomes consumptive, collectivizing subjects unable to ignore its urgent and consistent addresses:

[In non-place] everything proceeds as if space had been trapped by time, as if there were no history other than the last forty-eight hours of news, as if each individual history were drawing its motives, its words and images, from the inexhaustible stick of an unending history in the present. (Augé 105)

In spaces where discourse addresses each and every inhabitant as one of many, acculturating travelers in what Wood calls the rhetoric of ubiquity (to each and every

traveler, the terminal's disembodied announcer remarks, "Welcome to Chicago-O'Hare International Airport"), whatever "usual determinants" that exist before entry into the terminal non-place dissolve amid the hectic ebb and flow of near-endless movements and discursive repetitions.

As Wood points out, to stand still in the terminal ultimately defeats the purpose of travel. Even established waiting places, spaces designed specifically for stasis and which are "often packed with crying infants, lounging teenagers, stressed parents, cell phone-engaged business travelers, [have] no meaning except as locations from which anyone with any sense wishes to depart" (Wood 335). Similarly, the discourses—spatial and otherwise—encountered either in movement or in waiting often demand immediate attention in much the same way as road signs or emergency broadcast signals demand attention, or the police officer's hailing, "Hey, you there!" Collectivized but transhistoricized—within what may be described as a series of shared solitudes—the traveler negotiates the terminal's discursive constraints by recognizing that "'it was really him who was hailed' (and not someone else)," by identifying him/herself as a transhistorical consumer subject in a constitutive narrative embodying the accelerated conditions of late consumer capitalism. In either case, the experience of shared solitudes—of existing collectively in a transhistorical or eternal present—serves to produce the terminal as rhetorical space evoking "a communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself" (Augé 79).¹³ Like the homogenized terminal itself, the traveler in non-place becomes ubiquitous, a

¹³ Augé's sense that non-places put us in contact only with another image of the self may be better understood when we consider the wide range of "individualized" technologies commonly used and available in most airports today, including laptop computers, ATMs, cellular phones, personal DVD players, and portable Mp3 players.

displaced subject occupying a placeless space: “One is not ‘in’ LA while passing through LAX any more than one gets wet while ‘surfing’ the Internet. In a major airport like LAX, you never get the sense that ‘at last, I see what Los Angelinos are like.’ There are no real Angelinos in terminal space. No Californians or Americans, either” (Wood 331), only travelers collectivized in space and in discourse. Within the field of relations constituting agentive capacity in terminal space, Charland would argue, the capacity to produce and maintain social space remains elusive insofar as the production of space is largely constrained by the narrativized discourses *always already* constituting subjectivities in non-place. Similarly, for Augé, the sensation of shared solitudes expressive of non-place—and the positing of transhistorical subjects within ubiquitous commercial space—contribute to the perpetuation of transitory consumer identities within the accelerated conditions of supermodernity. These rather bleak assessments of the agentive capacities afforded travelers in terminal non-place may be usefully complicated, however, if we understand agency, as Giddens suggests, as both enabling and constraining actions within the recursiveness of production and reproduction in social space.

Integrating Agency in Terminal Space

All social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree
of penetration of the social forms which oppress them.

Anthony Giddens (72)

As suggested above, the ideological discourses constituting terminal space constrain agency—and more specifically agent functions—by interpellating travelers as consumers in a transhistorical travel narrative that always already presumes the existence

of consumer subjects. If examined as a form of agency or field of relations recursively producing and reproducing potentiality, as Giddens argues, then the constitution of agent functions within non-place may be understood as both constraining *and enabling* agentive capacities. In other words, the constitution of consumer subjects in terminal space may be seen as concomitant with the production and reproduction of spatial practices in terminal non-place, which, as Giddens might suggest, acts as a kind of system, integrating relations such that the (re)productions of the system occur recursively. As Giddens explains,

the notion of integration . . . refers to the degree of interdependence of action, or ‘systemness’, that is involved in any mode of system reproduction. ‘Integration’ can be defined therefore as regularised ties, interchanges or *reciprocity of practices* between either actors or collectivities. ‘Reciprocity of practices’ has to be understood as involving regularised relations of relative autonomy and dependence between parties concerned. (76, emphasis his)

Anticipating Herndl and Licon, Giddens maintains that structure—what he sees as the structural properties producing relations within systems or, as he writes, “providing the ‘binding’ of time and space in social systems” (64)—“is both enabling and constraining . . . [It] forms ‘personality’ and ‘society’ simultaneously—but in neither case exhaustively . . . *Structure thus is not to be conceptualised as a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production*” (69-70, emphasis his). The recursiveness suggested in Giddens’ conception of structure and agency within social systems may, as Campbell and Bradford Vivian suggest, further extend the range and potential for action within constituted subject positions. In her discussion of constitutive agency, Campbell contextualizes Althusser’s conception of interpellation as offering agentive capacities within a field of relations:

If one thinks of the subject-positions into which we are born, which Althusser notes, and the subject-positions ideologically and materially available to us in the symbolic and material practico-inert, then subjectivity and agency can be understood as the ways in which individuals accept, negotiate, and resist subject-positions available to them at given moments in a particular culture. (7)

Citing Smith, Campbell argues that such a reconsideration of the constitution of subjectivity repositions the subject as an agent, as a form of subjectivity in which, as Smith describes, the possibility of resistance or intervention is maintained even though resistance itself must be produced and reproduced within an ideological context (xxxv). The possibility of intervention within constituted subject positions, I would add, parallels what I have been describing here as agent functions in which agentive capacities are constituted within a field of relations: Althusser's "culturally available [and shifting] subject-positions are," Campbell argues, "simultaneously, obstacles and opportunities" (8). Similarly, Vivian argues for an expanded understanding of the Althusserian subject position as a "permeable space through which one might pass in relative proximity to the center" (314). "While the subject is a coordinate of the social," Vivian argues, "this coordinate is not a single, fixed point" (314). Rather, he maintains, it is "a relative center that expands and contracts as a given discursive regime makes access to the relative center either more or less accessible" (314). Since the subject is not transcendent, he argues, the positions either constituted or adopted by the subject remain similarly situational. "There is," he writes, "a historicity to our being and its expression, to our subjectivity and its elaboration" (303). At any given time subjects may occupy multiple positions corresponding to various external discourses. No longer autonomous, subjects—or rather agents—in Vivian's conception "self-fashion" identities by enfolding ideological discourses into multiple interior spaces. Literally the spaces inhabited by

subjects, subject positions become here permeable spaces, multiple and proliferating, “pocketing and animating the machinery of the social” (314).

Though the agentive capacities in non-place are no doubt constrained, our conceptions of agency within such spaces would benefit by seeing potentiality—the capacity to produce relations within social (and spatial) systems—as recursively (re)produced. In this sense, the traveler constituted as a transhistorical consumer within the conditions of supermodernity may be seen both as inhabiting—and as limited to—a constrained agent function but also as participating in the production and reproduction of spatial practices composing terminal non-place. This last point, I would add, while it may to some degree suggest the traveler’s unwilling participation in the perpetuation of late consumer capitalism, may as well be considered, in Giddens’ terms, as itself enabling the traveler’s intervention in these productions and, by extension, his/her capacity to reshape the “potentially malleable world” (56), to in effect hold space accountable for its position within the production of relations. If, however, we regard agents as “cultural dopes or mere ‘bearers of a mode production’, with no worthwhile understanding of their surroundings or the circumstances of their action” (71), then we risk conflating the importance of agency to an ideological puppet show in which lifeless marionettes perform in direct accordance with the strings and intentions of an unseen but nonetheless instrumental manipulator overseeing and producing a simulated reality.

Chapter 3

Classroom Space: Rhetorical Agency and Real-and-Imagined Geographies in the First-Year Writing Course

Place does matter; surroundings do have an effect on learning or attitudes toward learning, and material spaces have a political edge. In short, *where* writing instruction takes place has everything to do with *how*.

Nedra Reynolds (“Composition’s Imagined” 20)

In “Composition’s Imagined Geographies: The Politics of Space in the Frontier, City, and Cyberspace,” Nedra Reynolds argues that composition’s most important spatial metaphors—the frontier, the city, and cyberspace—have been “rendered benign, or anesthetized” (14) by the discipline’s over-privileging of them as transparent spaces, as “single and objective” (19) representations of everyday existence. According to Reynolds, these pervasive “imagined geographies,” while useful in enabling “composition’s disciplinary development and identity” (13), nevertheless epitomize the discipline’s tendency to neglect “the relationship between material spaces and actual practices . . . where writers and writing teachers work, live, talk, daydream, or doodle” (14, 30).

To neglect composition’s material spaces—its campuses, schoolyards, and classrooms—is, Reynolds argues, “to ignore the politics of space, the ways in which our surroundings or location affect the work that is done there” (30). For Reynolds, the politics of space has everything to do with how material space is allocated, maintained, and inhabited by composition instructors and writing students. As Adrienne Rich recalls about Open Admissions at New York’s City College in the early 1970s, “the

overcrowding was acute. In the fall of 1970 we taught in open plywood cubicles set up in Great Hall [where] you could hear noise from other cubicles; concentration was difficult for students” (qtd. in Reynolds 21). Though such a scene may not immediately resonate with writing instructors working in less urban settings, Rich’s statement nonetheless serves as a reminder that spatiality—and the politics of space—“has everything to do with *how*” we teach writing (Reynolds 20, emphasis hers).¹⁴

In part building on Edward W. Soja and Henri Lefebvre’s sense of the trialectics being—spatiality, historicality, and sociality—producing relations within the conditions of late capitalism, Reynolds argues that while composition’s imagined geographies have enabled the rise and maturation of the discipline, they have as well contributed to a compression of space and time such that as “space flattens out, time becomes both harder to notice *and* more important” (18, emphasis hers). Though composition’s imagined geographies “have served to give composition vision and a sense of mission” within the university at large, they have as well, she argues, “served to mask the politics of space” (29), to obscure the “negotiation of power that takes place across and within a number of spaces” (13), including the “real and imagined” composition classroom.

In *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*, Reynolds extends her discussion of the importance of space in writing instruction by turning once again to Soja and Lefebvre and their notion of “the trialectics of spatiality” wherein perceived, conceived, and lived spaces function together in “indivisible and

¹⁴ As I move to examine the “composition classroom,” I do so in an admittedly limited fashion, having in mind classroom spaces more typical of large land grant institutions. Nevertheless, Reynolds and Rich raise an important distinction among writing classrooms that should be pursued in more detail. As Rich rightly questions in “Teaching Language in Open Admissions,” “How does one compare this experience of [urban, inner city] college with that of the Columbia students down at 116th Street in their quadrangle of gray stone dormitories, marble steps, flowered borders, wide spaces of time and architecture in which to talk and think” (60)?

entangled ways” (16). As in Soja’s broader trialectics of being conceptualizing the general production of relations within late capitalism, the convergences within the trialectics of spatiality serve to produce space as an active, not a passive surface (Reynolds, *Geographies* 15). As Reynolds explains, perceived space “is what we smell or otherwise register with our senses; it is the material expression of social relations in space” (15). Conceived space, on the other hand, “is made up of conceptual abstractions like geometry that may in fact inform the actual configuration of spatial practices” (15) through its formulation of the abstract rules governing space and, in short, the ways we conceive space. Lastly, lived spaces are the spaces shared “by inhabitants and users” (15); as Lefebvre describes it, lived space “has its source in history and is ‘alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or center: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard’” (qtd. in Reynolds 15). To illustrate the trialectical relationship among the three parts, Reynolds turns to the university and its spatial (re)productions: “The educational mission of universities (*conceived space*) may conceal from us their status as actual workplaces (*perceived space*), and the two together combine in *lived space*: a university is a place where an internationally renowned researcher can’t find a parking place” (16, emphases hers).

In *Thirdspace*, Soja extends Lefebvre’s “interweaving incantation of three different kinds of spaces” by suggesting that the first two—perceived and conceived—constitute dual modes of thinking that have characterized understandings of space—and indeed have been, according to Soja, over-privileged—within the “mainstream spatial or geographical imagination” (10). Perceived space—which, he suggests, may be thought of as “real” space—is fixated on “the concrete materiality of spatial forms, on things that

can be empirically mapped” (10). Conceived—or “imagined” space—is “conceived in ideas about space, in thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms” (10). The third, lived space, was, in Lefebvre’s description, “a simple combination or mixture of the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’ in varying doses” (10). Lived space, Soja suggests, is simultaneously real and imagined—real-and-imagined—never standing alone or totally separate from its precedents (70). Much like geography and many of the social sciences in general, composition remains most concerned with the epistemologies of imagined space which, as Soja observes, are “immediately distinguishable by . . . their implicit assumption that spatial knowledge is primarily produced through discursively devised representations of space, through the spatial workings of the mind” (78-9). It is in this sense that Reynolds offers her critique of composition’s imagined geographies and its neglected interest in lived space (real-and-imagined space) and, consequently, the trialectical production of space. As she argues in *Geographies of Writing*, readdressing real-and-imagined space in the composition classroom may “suggest ways to rethink spatial metaphors, to re-imagine acts of writing, and to attend to the politics of space as they intersect with teaching and research practices” (7):

Composition’s push toward disciplinarity—toward legitimacy as an academic specialty—motivated a search for places to stake out turf, to colonize, to call home . . . In fact, the ways in which we imagine space and place have a direct impact on how we imagined writing and acts of writing as well as the inhabitants of composition studies—and its outsiders, real or imagined. For reasons that are understandable, given the material conditions, as students crowded into worn, urban classrooms during Open Admissions, the tendency for instructors was to look past those material spaces toward imagined geographies, where an ideal pedagogy was possible. Composition, in short, turned to imagined geographies to

build its empire, rather than studying the relationship between the worn, urban classroom and the writing produced there. (Reynolds, *Geographies* 27)¹⁵

In composition studies, Reynolds maintains, the compression of real-and-imagined space into a deceptively homogeneous “transparent space” has consequences for instructors and students, specifically insofar as space-time compression (exacerbated by the accelerated velocities of transportation and information technologies within the conditions of supermodernity) produces the illusion of “more time to work and thus more profit” (“Composition’s Imagined” 17). As the importance of space is diminished through the largely unrestricted circulation of information and capital within the so-called global marketplace, time appears to expand. In the composition classroom, this phenomenon often leads instructors and administrators to believe that “space is no big deal, that every divide is smaller than it seems” (19), falsely perpetuating “the general sensations of a shrinking planet—busier, nosier, and more crowded—trigger[ing] the temptation to look out over urban classrooms and think ‘the whole world is here’” (18). As Reynolds implies, and as this chapter will argue, the privileging of imagined space over real-and-imagined space within composition studies contributes to the constraining of agency as a field of relations enabling the (re)production of agent functions by

¹⁵ In addition to Reynolds’ critique of composition’s shift toward legitimacy through disciplinarity, Geoffrey Sirc, Sharon Crowley, and (to some extent even) James Berlin have voiced concerns over the institutionalization of writing in universities. In what is arguably the most spirited argument to date, however, Victor Vitanza criticizes his colleagues (“colligs,” to use his vernacular) whose pedagogical efforts he sees as further securing composition’s place as a legitimate—and therefore lifeless—discipline in the uni-versity: “We are confronted with the impossible. The dead give-a-way—it is the dead giving life away; or unbeknownst to themselves, the dead giving life *a way*—is especially noticeable in my collig’s presuming the necessity for rhetoric or for writing (composition) or whatever to be a discipline. The explanation often is, ‘After all, we will never be taken seriously by our colleagues at the university as long as we are not a discipline!’ And we must stand with the uni-versity. IOW, go down with the ship! Perhaps, there are two possibilities here: ‘We’ can start teaching writing precisely as the university needs it taught. Or ‘we’ can attempt ‘to teach’ writing the way ‘we’ want. But there are, let us not forget, [Paul Virilio’s] third (interval) *wayves*. And therefore, ‘we’ should ask: **What is it that writing wants?** I suspect that ‘writing’ does not want what either the uni-versity thinks it needs not what ‘we’ think we want” (emphases his).

obfuscating, or neglecting altogether, the composition classroom's real-and-imagined place within the university and, broadly speaking, within the cultural conditions of supermodernity.

As Marx and other social materialists have argued, the compression of time and space through "technologies that allow the rapid, almost instantaneous, transmission of information and ever-faster modes of transportation" (Reynolds, "Composition's Imagined" 17) alters perception such that the world seems "smaller than it used to be" (17). As the velocities of production increase, including transportation and information technologies, space appears to shrink while time appears to expand, producing "the illusion that there is more time" for workers to produce. For Fredric Jameson, the space-time compression is expressed most vividly in the conditions of postmodernity where "a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality" (9) replaces modernity's emphases on the correlation between outward expression and inner affect.¹⁶ In terms of composition's imagined geographies, time-space compression establishes a similar dichotomy between real-and-imagined space and the discipline's numerous spatial metaphors:

We get the false sense of going somewhere when we log on and having been somewhere when we log off. Through the ability of technology to simulate travel, we think we're "experiencing" a different culture, otherness, or diversity, but we're not even leaving the comfortable (or crowded) confines of our homes or offices. (Reynolds, "Composition's Imagined" 18)

As composition studies works to account for new technologies whose velocities of production far surpass the development of new pedagogies and revised curricula, their relationships to spatiality—that is, the ways in which such technologies alter the real-and-

¹⁶As an example of modernism's more correlative emphases on the outward expression of inner affect, Jameson offers Munch's "The Scream," modernism's quintessential expression of embodied angst and alienation.

imagined space of the writing classroom—are often neglected. In this sense, space in the composition classroom is compressed, flattened into a new kind of superficiality, or, as Reynolds prefers, a new form of transparency.

As transportation and information technologies transgress the material borders of the traditional idea of the nation-state into what is increasingly a post-national global economy, connecting disparate regions into a deceptively unified web of relations, space appears more transparent or “innocent” (19), suggesting, as Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose argue, “that the world can be seen as it really is and that there can be unmediated access to the truth of objects it sees; it is a space of mimetic representation” (qtd. in Reynolds, “Composition’s Imagined” 19). In terms of spatiality, Soja suggests, the “illusion of transparency” “dematerializes space into pure ideation and representation, an intuitive way of thinking that equally prevents us from seeing the social construction of affective geographies, the concretization of social relations embedded in spatiality” (*Postmodern* 7). In this sense, the illusion of transparency—the flattening of space into a new kind of superficiality—tends once again to privilege conceived space over perceived and lived space, neglecting real-and-imagined space and its capacity to both draw “upon the material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism” and extend “well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning” (*Thirdspace* 11).

For Reynolds, the prevalence of transparent space in composition studies is particularly dangerous for women and other minorities because, by envisioning the conditions of late capitalism or supermodernity as readily apparent and equally accessible, transparent space “denies differences or neglects the politics of space, especially in domestic or everyday environments” (19). Though this chapter focuses

more on composition's imagined geographies as "peculiar" (Sirc 4) forms of non-place, examining in particular their discursive (re)productions of the present-day university as a kind of transparent space embodying the illusion of a cohesive and appropriable academic discourse, Reynolds' warning informs much of the analysis to follow. "Place does matter," she rightly states; however, in the supermodern composition classroom situated on the study and practice of academic discourse, space still remains largely transparent insofar as the spaces we privilege—imagined geographies such as the discourse community—tend to overshadow composition's everyday material spaces—its cramped and sterile classrooms—and, perhaps more importantly, our (instructors' and students') complex relations to these real-and-imagined geographies.

In this chapter, therefore, I examine composition's emphasis on the metaphor of the discourse community as yet another imagined geography in the discipline. More specifically, I argue that the teaching of academic discourse refashions the current condition of the academy as a form of transparent space and that this practice, perhaps unintentionally, serves to reinforce an imagined conception of the supermodern university as a collaborative and collegial engine working collectively toward the steady production of truth. In the first part of this chapter, I offer a reading of the contemporary composition classroom as a form of non-place, embodying—in much the same way as the international airport terminal—the cultural and economic conditions of post-nationalism and multinational capitalism. In order to more fully understand the constraining of rhetorical agency in classroom non-place, I argue, we must examine as well the classroom's specific role within the professional and political contexts informing teaching and research in the supermodern university. In the second part of this chapter,

therefore, I introduce Bill Readings' sense of the contemporary University of Excellence as reflecting the dissolution of the western idea of the autonomous nation-state. As the transgressive natures of transportation and information technologies contribute to "the perception that the earth is shrinking to the size of a 'global village'" (Reynolds 18), the purposes and practices of the university change as well. In place of the Germanic University of Culture, in which the academy is seen as a direct extension of the nation-state and thus responsible for the acculturation of national subjects, Readings positions the University of Excellence—a corporatized system operating without a cultural referent—as expressive of the disintegration of the autonomous nation-state and the corresponding rise of late consumer capitalism. This shift, I argue, integrates university space, once seen as insulated from external change, into the conditions of supermodernity, suggesting its emergence as a distinct form of non-place. In terms of the teaching of academic discourse, the shift from a University of Culture to one of Excellence is largely unacknowledged in the discipline's numerous attempts to legitimize the study of discourse communities in the first-year writing course.

In the third part of this chapter, I examine in some depth David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University"—one of composition's earliest, but still most influential, arguments for the teaching of academic discourse—as representative of what may be called composition's fourth imagined geography, the perception and elaboration of a coherent space of collaborative scholarly inquiry functioning outside of everyday conditions. More specifically, I suggest that Bartholomae's belief that first-year writing students must learn to speak to instructors in "the privileged language of university discourses" (459) corresponds more directly with the University of Culture than with the

contemporary University of Excellence, a disconnect that ultimately constrains rhetorical agency by conceiving of the university as an imagined geography—at times resembling a communal and collaborative anthropological place—rather than as a real-and-imagined non-place functioning within the conditions of supermodernity.

In the fourth and final part of this chapter, I propose a re-visioning of composition's disciplinary pedagogies such that they account for the conditions of supermodernity already informing the purposes and professional practices within the University of Excellence. In place of Bartholomae's and Bizzell's imagined geography of the discourse community, therefore, I offer Geoffrey Sirc's populist reconception of the composition classroom as a real-and-imagined space organized around "the contemporary urban verbalscape" (199) evident in students' and instructors' everyday relations. By repositioning the first-year composition course within the cultural velocities of everyday life, and by addressing classroom and university space as forms of non-place expressive of the conditions of supermodernity, we may gain a fuller understanding of agency in non-place insofar as the agentive capacities enabled and constrained in the writing classroom hinge, in part, on our capacity to recognize space as complexly (re)produced through the interconnectedness of perceived, conceived, and lived space. Though the argument presented here aims to complicate the spatial metaphor of the discourse community, and in part the teaching of academic discourse in the first-year writing course, it is not intended as—and nor should it be read as—an out-right disparaging of many well-intentioned and well-implemented pedagogies that manage (and this is no small feat) to lead students to understand "the reasoning, the conventions, and the epistemological assumptions of the relevant discourse community" (Linton,

Madigan, and Johnson 65). Nevertheless, I believe, such awareness, as difficult as it may be for students to master, may itself represent an irreconcilable impasse impeding students' understanding of the purposes and professional practices of inquiry in the supermodern university.

“A Gentle Form of Possession”: Composition Classroom as Non-Place

We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology.

Edward W. Soja (*Postmodern* 6)

For Marc Augé, the emergence and increasing prevalence of non-places is tied directly to the accelerated velocities of transportation and information technologies expressive of the conditions of supermodernity. And though Augé's conception of supermodernity resists the breaks or revisions suggested in many recent descriptions of the postmodern condition, preferring instead to see late capitalism as the extension—or better still, the *excess*—of the modernist condition, his understanding of the complex interrelationship between contemporary consumer capitalism and its utilitarian non-places nevertheless parallels—in several significant ways—similar conceptions of the hyper-realized postmodern condition, which as, as Jameson argues, embodies the cultural logic of late capitalism. Though it would be a mistake to fully equate Augé's reading of the constitutive agencies of non-place with Jameson's elaboration of what Chela Sandoval has called an “exhilarating form of hopelessness” (26), there nevertheless exists some profitable common ground between the two, ground that serves to contextualize non-place within the “hyperreal” practices of late consumer capitalism. This awareness

of space, and in particular non-place, as a critical component in the production of relations—the trialectics of being, for Soja and Lefebvre—when similarly applied to the non-place of the composition classroom, suggests several significant and even startling possibilities, not least of which is an apparent disregard for the presence and importance of real-and-imagined space within the discipline’s most institutionalized pedagogies.

In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson argues that space (and in particular architecture) most clearly expresses the sensation of “placeless dissociation” (42) characteristic of postmodern experience. Situating his conception of the postmodern condition within late capitalism, Jameson examines postmodern culture and aesthetics as elaborate symptoms of both the waning of affect (10) and the waning of historicity (21) stemming from the emergence of multinational capitalism. For Jameson, both symptoms correspond to a broader cultural, political, and technological shift in which realist and modernist notions of referentiality disintegrate amid omnipresent simulacra of images and sensations (re)produced via new velocities of transportation and information technologies within the conditions of postmodernity:

I want to suggest that our faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of a present-day multinational capitalism. The technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating not so much in its own right but because it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself. (37-38)

As the accelerated practices of multinational capitalism begin to exceed the limits of human comprehension—as transportation and information technologies fuel the illusion of faster-than-light commerce and communication—our relations to time and space change such that neither appears particularly important in the ongoing production of mass

consumer culture. Nevertheless, as Augé notes, the conditions of late capitalism tend to produce an overabundance of space to go along with our increasing sense that spatial limits or impasses have been conquered, or reduced, as Jameson might suggest, to “a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality” (9):

We are in an era characterized by changes of scale—of course in the context of space exploration, but also on earth: rapid means of transport have brought any capital within a few hours’ travel of any other. And in the privacy of our homes, finally, images of all sorts, relayed by satellites and caught by the aerials that bristle on the roofs of our remotest hamlets, can give us an instant, sometimes simultaneous vision of an event taking place on the other side of the planet. (Augé 31)

For Augé, as well as for Jameson, the world of late consumer capitalism “does not exactly match the one in which we believe we live for we live in a world that we have not yet learned to look at” (Augé 35-36). Still, where Augé and Jameson differ is in their assessments of our capacities to learn and adopt new relations to, as Jameson calls it, postmodern “hyperspace.” For Jameson, the ubiquitous nature of postmodern hyperspace or non-place defies present-day comprehension insofar as it disarms modernist modes of perceiving, and in particular our way of inscribing meaning on the world through affect and historicity. “Our perceptual habits,” Jameson argues, “were formed in that older kind of space I have called the space of high modernism” (38-39). In this sense, the waning of affect and historicity in postmodern hyperspace corresponds to a perceived break between modernist and postmodernist modes of perceiving. For Augé, the shift (if we can call it that) from modernity to supermodernity suggests similar dissociative effects, yet his account of late capitalism differs from Jameson’s in its recognition of consumer culture as *over-inscribed* with meaning, history, and spatiality, therefore distinguishing supermodernity, he suggests, as “the positive of a [postmodern] negative” (30). As

suggested in the previous chapter, Augé distances his conception of supermodernity from postmodernity, and in particular from the tendencies in postmodern theory to presuppose a general collapse in the idea of progress symptomatic of the conflation of meaning to superficiality and indeterminacy; in place of this, Augé argues, we exist within an overabundance of events, including meaning, history, and spatiality, and that “it is our need to understand the whole of the present that makes it difficult for us to give meaning to the recent past” (30). Unlike Jameson, therefore, who perceives postmodern hyperspace as exceeding the interpretative capacities of modernist subjects, the overabundance of the spatial practices within supermodernity can be, and should be, according to Augé, examined through methodologies available in the field of cultural anthropology.

Still, despite the disconnect between Jameson’s late capitalism/postmodernity and Augé’s supermodernity, their readings of spatial practices as expressive of broader cultural, political, and historical productions may be usefully linked as we begin to address agent functions informing relations within classroom non-places. For Jameson, as postmodern hyperspaces such as Los Angeles’s Westin Bonaventure Hotel continue to operate at velocities of signification far exceeding those of modernist space, our relations to them become less coherent and, to use Jameson’s term, more “schizophrenic.” The subject experiencing the placeless dissociation of postmodern hyperspace, he argues, has little choice but to submit to the “incapacity of our minds . . . to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects” (44). For Jameson, postmodern hyperspace “has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to

organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world” (44). Put differently, in non-place, Augé writes, “everything proceeds as if space had been trapped by time, as if there were no history other than the last forty-eight hours of news, as if each individual history were drawing its motives, its words and images, from an inexhaustible stock of an unending history in the present” (104-5).

For Augé and Jameson, the commercial practices of super (and post) modernity are dependent on spaces suited to the rapid transportation of the means of production, including labor and capital. Non-places, therefore—or, as Jameson prefers, hyperspaces—become the ubiquitous utilitarian spaces enabling the (re)production of multinational capitalism. In their various, and often complementary examples, Augé and Jameson maintain that such spaces invite, or more likely constrain, users of non-places to similarly adopt the accelerated velocities expressive of late capitalism. For Augé, sensations of shared solitude often experienced in non-place are expressive of a new cultural and economic logic of supermodernity in which excess in the service of the present moment prevails over shared identities, relations, and histories suggestive of anthropological placemaking. These excesses, as Jameson might suggest, go beyond new aesthetics of architectural design to spatially embody the accelerated velocities of late capitalism circulating continuously through the so-called “global marketplace.” These velocities consequently transform our perceptions of “distance” and “territory,” particularly in their relation to modernist and pre-modernists conceptions of a unified and autonomous nation-state. Though not solely to blame, these newer and faster transportation and communication technologies—technologies often credited with the

expansion and proliferation of global consumer capitalism—have helped significantly to blur once firmly-established national boundaries, effectively weakening (if not demolishing altogether) the insular identity of the autonomous nation-state. As the post-Marxist theorist Jean-Marie Guéhenno suggests, the decline of the Western nation-state as a singular “territory defined by precise frontiers” (4) is today of “dwindling importance” (7) given broader economic shifts in the West from agricultural to informational industries: “So, with the revolution in telecommunications,” he argues, “the network is divested of territoriality: we have passed from a network of navigable waterways and railroads to an infrastructure of air transport and telecommunications that has profoundly upset the notion of space” (8). As Augé might suggest, these new networks of relations ultimately override the western image of the nation-state as an anthropological place unified by its citizens’ sense of shared identities and histories. In place of the image of a precisely determined territory, therefore, we see a general collapse of the image of the autonomous nation-state into a complex network of interrelated economic interests and corporate relations.

To consider the composition classroom as a kind of non-place, as yet another de-historicized spatial expression of late capitalism, therefore, is to suggest not only that university classroom space constrains communal relations and anthropological placemaking—few instructors, I think, would disagree with this—but to suggest also that classroom non-place, along with the university of which it is part, embodies sensations of placeless dissociation expressive of multinational capitalism. Arguing this last point, particularly in terms of the first-year composition course where an understanding of academic discourse presumably “teaches [students] to participate in the continuous

process of making, applying, and revising truth” (Kirscht and Schlenz 3), calls into question many of the discipline’s foundational assumptions concerning the purposes and practices of academic inquiry. In order to fully appreciate how the non-place of the composition classroom constrains agentive capacities—insofar as the exclusive teaching of academic discourse as “the privileged voice” of the academy, expressive of an imagined cohesive community motivated by communal purposes and shared identities, limits the agent functions available to students in first-year writing courses—it is important to understand how the conditions of supermodernity find their way into the material spaces we teach in everyday, or, put differently, why our composition classrooms more closely resemble non-places, such the international airport terminal, than they do anthropological places, such as the more comfortable and collaborative places we more often imagine.

As I discuss in more detail in the previous chapter, non-places such as the international airport terminal constrain agency by constituting each traveler as one of many collectivized but solitary users of that space. In cases such as the terminal, travelers immersed in its utilitarian and transitory rhetoric tend to embody the accelerated velocities of movement and relations suggestive of non-place. As Andrew Wood notes, even established waiting places within terminals, spaces designed specifically for stasis, have no meaning except as similarly transitory locations from which “anyone with any sense wishes to depart.” Arguably, this attempt on the part of the terminal’s design team to slow things down, to incorporate a decelerated communal place within the sleek, sluice-like corridors of the supermodern terminal, serves to reinforce the clear tensions confronting travelers as they are “subjected to a gentle form of possession,” as they are

invited to surrender themselves to the passive joys of identity-loss (Augé 103). In terms of the material space of the composition classroom, the expulsion of students' and instructors' "usual determinants" suggests a potentially radical re-visioning of the instructional spaces we inhabit and work in (and with) everyday. In "The Inertia of Classroom Furniture: Unsituating the Classroom," Ruth M. Mirtz suggests that composition's privileging of imagined geographies, which are as Reynolds notes "socially produced through discourse" ("Composition's Imagined" 15), comes at the expense of concern for the "real" or material spaces contributing significantly to both the production of discourse and the development of new pedagogies:

Because we tend to see real space as less connected to discursive space (i.e. when physical conditions of the classroom are ignored in favor of disciplinary discursive space), we pay more attention to how our writing theories occupy ideological space within theories of learning than how 25 students will occupy space in a 15' X 20' room with no windows and two pillars. When we ignore physical space, we allow real classroom space to become transparent, timeless, and 'innocent,' as Reynolds explains. (15)

As in the case of a colleague "who imagined the chairs [in his classroom] were bolted down because he didn't see them move and didn't bother to see if he was right or not" (15), imagined space provides "very real inertia" as we move to address the importance of real space in writing instruction (15). Though Mirtz aims more to emphasize the importance of real or perceived space in writing classrooms than to address the ways in which real and imagined space function to produce lived space, she nonetheless gestures toward an awareness of real-and-imagined space by suggesting that, in order to overcome the inertia of classroom furniture, we reconsider classroom space as both real and imagined—or ideological, to use her term—space (27). In many ways, composition studies is very much interested in the production of space; however this interest remains

narrowly focused on the field's imagined geographies, discursively produced and reproduced to such an extent that, as Reynolds argues, they tend to appear transparent. As Soja's trialectics of spatiality suggests, however, we cannot simply disregard these imagined geographies simply because they have been over-privileged. Rather, addressing the production of space in writing classrooms requires that we consider how real and imagined space together (re)produce relations and agentic capacities.

Much like the ubiquitous and transitory non-places described by Augé, the contemporary composition classroom embodies a homogenizing spatial logic, what Reynolds laments in *Geographies of Writing* as the invariable aesthetic of university classrooms which “tend to look all alike, cool and sterile,” where “the only stuff on the walls [are] advertisements for study abroad or schemes for earning money” (157). Similar to terminal non-place, where there is little connection between the established urban area and its peripheralized transportation space—and unlike elementary, middle, and even high school classrooms—instruction spaces in many colleges and universities rarely reveal evidence of their shared histories or previous inhabitations. Inhabitants in the composition classroom are temporary, Reynolds writes—“only for three hours a week, in and out” (*Geographies* 157-58). Consequently, any evidence of inhabitation left behind by instructors or students—class notes on the chalkboard, student presentations, annotated rough drafts, web-based research—are typically removed either by the next class waiting to occupy the space or by the building's cleaning staff sometime during the night.

For Reynolds as well as for Mirtz, ignoring how the real space of the classroom affects learning and instruction, either by enabling or constraining rhetorical agency, risks

even greater consequences extending far beyond the production and use of space in composition courses. In *English Composition as a Happening*, Geoffrey Sirc warns that “bland architecture” in first-year writing programs tends to “evoke simplistic programs” (1). I will return to Sirc’s point later in this chapter. Suffice to say for now that space matters in composition programs insofar as how we inhabit classroom space has everything to do with how we teach and learn in this space; however, as Kevin Ball observes in “Excavating Neglected Space(s): Asserting Community in the Composition Classroom,” “the field of composition has yet to imagine a theory of writing instruction that fully imagines the implications of the linkages between space, knowledge, and power for composition students within the intellectual work of the classroom” (168). In composition programs where the teaching of academic discourse replaces rhetoric-based writing pedagogies, pedagogies rely increasingly on spatial metaphors—such as the frontier, discourse community, cyberspace, and even Kenneth Burke’s parlor—to concretize many of the university’s abstract discursive practices.¹⁷ Though such metaphors have proven quite productive in organizing and translating the conventions and purposes of academic discourse, their constant recirculation within composition pedagogies risks flattening the importance of space, and its relations to learning and teaching, to mere transparency. Moreover, the privileging of such imagined geographies, particularly in the non-place of the classroom, has potentially serious consequences for

¹⁷ For Sharon Crowley, very few contemporary first-year composition courses—and especially those that focus on academic discourses produced within the university—engage rhetoric to its fullest capacities. Rather, because such courses are often staffed by graduate students and part-time instructors and lecturers, whose training may not have involved rhetorical studies, such courses, at best, simplify rhetoric as an interpretive strategy, suited to the identification of “rhetorical” conventions in disciplinary writing. For Crowley, a “full-blown rhetoric course” would require immersing “students and teachers in political and social critique” insofar as rhetoric must, at minimum, involve the art of invention and the production and circulation of arguments within social and civic discourses, images, and events (“Composition is Not Rhetoric”).

students who may not see how these imagined spaces affect, and are affected by, the practices of everyday life.

With this risk in mind, Ball builds on Reynolds' call for emphases on geographic literacy in composition studies, suggesting that renewed focus on "community-based inquiry" in the first-year writing course empowers students to critically assess the relationship between real and imagined spaces by exploring how local communities are conceived in various forms of discourse and how students may in turn "assert community through writing as action" (179):

It is this lack of a sense of spatiality, the occluding of the spatiality of social life, that makes the community such an 'unreal' site of study for many students. Their failure to see the intersections of space and time, of the vertical and the horizontal, prevents them from appreciating the continuing significance of community. After a semester spent researching his community, one of my students reflected, "You know, when you come to the university, you don't expect to think about where you're from ever again." (171)

Much like the traveler's experience in terminal non-place, where time and space are both compressed and accelerated in the "urgency of the present moment" (Augé 104), the student here senses a clear disconnect between the "real" world outside of the classroom and the "imagined" and insular world inside of the university and its academic discourses. Additionally, the student's comment suggests that the identities, relations, and histories students have prior to their arrival at the university, what Augé would call their "usual determinants," do not matter so much because the student's success within the university is dependent on his/her capacity to operate within the accelerated velocities of the academy's decontextualized present:

Students assume that their hometowns, for instance, are places they have left (in the past) to attend the university (which represents the present), with their careers (the future) lying promisingly before them. Privileging the moment, they subordinate geography to a belief in the continuum of history and the prevalence

of time over space, without realizing the continuing intersections and implications of time, place, and space—whether those spaces are the places of past communities or the present university community they now inhabit. (Ball 172)

Though Ball sees his students' lack of geographic literacy as expressive of the field's inability to connect understandings of space to knowledge and power, his sense that students tend to privilege time over space suggests as well that the material spaces we occupy within the university constrain rhetorical agency insofar as they embody the de-historicizing conditions of supermodernity. In the non-place of the composition classroom, identities, relations, and histories are not maintained but are rather recirculated in much the same way as customers and capital are recirculated in market systems. Though few instructors would consider their students customers, the shifting nature of the supermodern university suggests that the presence of non-place in the composition classroom has broader implications beyond the localized scene of instruction. The university itself, working increasingly within (and often in the development of) the accelerated conditions of supermodernity, begins as well to resemble the utilitarian non-places described by Augé. In the supermodern university where, as former Ohio State president E. Gordon Gee once said, "quality is the ultimate issue for the university and the customers it serves" (qtd. in Readings 22), German models of the "modern" university, epitomizing the "historical project for humanity that was the legacy of the Enlightenment" (Readings 5), reach the end of their usefulness when "the idea of national culture no longer provides an overarching ideological meaning for what goes on in the University, and as a result, what exactly gets taught or produced as knowledge matters less and less" (13). As we begin to rethink the imagined geographies informing the study of academic discourse, then, we must consider as well how these conceptions correspond

to professional practices comprising the present-day University of Excellence, and how these practices in turn contribute to our (and our students') experiences of "placeless dissociation" in classroom non-place. Before moving on to a discussion of the imagined geography of the discourse community, therefore, I turn to Bill Readings' conception of the supermodern—or "posthistorical"—University of Excellence to illustrate how localized non-places such as the composition classroom tend to embody the "politics and ideology" (Soja 6) of supermodernity.

Classroom Non-Place and the University of Excellence

Excellence is clearly a purely internal unit of value that effectively brackets all questions of reference or function, thus creating an internal market. Henceforth, the question of the University is only the question of relative value-for-money, the question posed to a student who is situated entirely as a *consumer*, rather than as someone who wants to think.

Bill Readings (27, emphasis his)

In order to more fully understand non-place, Augé suggests, we must first recognize the conditions responsible for its increasing prevalence or—as is perhaps more the case—its omnipresence. Similarly, in order to more fully understand classroom non-place, and its constraining and enabling of agentive capacities, we must as well consider the classroom's place within these conditions and in particular its localized role within the University of Excellence. In this section, therefore, I examine the composition classroom as part of the University of Excellence, where, as Readings argues, "intellectual activity and the culture it revived are being replaced by the pursuit of excellence and performance indicators" (55). An understanding of the supermodern

university as a corporate entity participating in the production of relations in late capitalism may in turn complicate composition's conceptualizations of academic discourse as comprising "conventions that bind the group in a discourse community, at work together on some project of interaction with the material world" (Bizzell 388). In terms of the present-day university, the decline of the nation-state has, according to Readings, affected the assumptions and practices informing teaching and research within these conditions. "The appeal to excellence occurs," he writes, "when the nation-state ceases to be the elemental unit of capitalism. At this point, instead of states striving with each other to best exemplify capitalism, capitalism swallows up the idea of the nation-state" (44).

According to Readings, the emergence of "performance indicators" measuring excellence in virtually all of aspects of production within the contemporary university—and for that matter the emergence of non-place in its everyday instructional spaces—is tied directly to the decline of the western idea of nation-state. Prior to this dissolution, universities largely served to uphold national traditions, acculturating students as national subjects unified by a shared sense of identity, relations, and history. Unlike the present-day University of Excellence, the University of Culture—based largely on German models and in particular on Wilhelm von Humboldt's founding of the University of Berlin to produce and inculcate "national self-knowledge" (15)—functioned collaboratively with state apparatuses to ensure the ongoing production of a cohesive national culture:

The University [of Culture]'s social mission is not to be understood in terms of either thought or action. The University is not just a site for contemplation that is then to be transformed into action. The University, that is, is not simply an instrument of state policy; rather, the University must embody thought as action,

as striving for an ideal. This is its bond with the state, for state and University are the two sides of a single coin. The University seeks to embody thought as action toward an ideal; the state must seek to realize action as thought, the idea of the nation. The state protects the action of the University; the University safeguards the thought of the state. And each strives to realize the idea of national culture. (69)

In the University of Culture, teaching and research are imagined as productive practices, literally producing and upholding a national culture through their efforts to solidify a strong and cohesive nation-state.¹⁸ For Readings, these practices characteristic of Humboldt's University have in many ways carried over to the British and, especially, American universities, particularly in the humanities where literature becomes the institutionalized means by which "an organic vision of the possibility of a unified national culture" (16) take strongest root. The emphases on national literary canons in American English departments, for example, suggests the desire to centralize a singular and unified national identity, even in the present-day era of post-nationalism and multinational capitalism:

If literature is the language of national culture, the written proof of a spiritual activity beyond the mechanical operations of material life, then the liberal education in intellectual culture, through the study of national literature, will produce the cultivated gentleman whose knowledge has no mechanical or direct utility, merely a spiritual link to the vitality of his national language as literature. (77-8)

With the loss of an autonomous nation-state, however, comes the loss of the image of the autonomous national subject. Within the conditions of late capitalism, subjectivity therefore becomes more centrifugal, diffusing amid increasingly complex networks of transportation and information technologies. And though completely reducing regional

¹⁸ Though American universities tend to model themselves on Humboldt's and other German Idealists' conceptions of the university, Readings resists a direct comparison between American universities and Humboldt's University of Culture by noting that the founding of the University of Berlin corresponded specifically to the emergence of German nationhood in the early nineteenth century (15).

or national difference to homogeneity as a result of multinational capitalism may ultimately oversimplify the complexities of relations possible within the conditions of supermodernity, the decline of the nation-state nevertheless allows for *the appearance of* uniform relations and uniform identities, particularly when we examine the subject in non-place, who “retrieves his identity only at Customs, at the tollbooth, at the check-out counter. Meanwhile, he obeys the same code as others, receives the same messages, responds to the same entreaties” (Augé 103).

As opposed to the University of Culture, the University of Excellence most directly expresses the decline of the idea of the nation-state and its concurrent deterritorialization of commercial interests in late capitalism. No longer charged with the acculturation of national subjects, universities today—and in particular American universities—begin increasingly to resemble the multinational corporations that have inherited positions of authority once exclusively inhabited by modern nation-states, adopting in the process many of their discourses, practices, and business strategies. If understood in terms of the supermodern university’s reliance on external sources of revenue—including corporate and alumni donors and, at least for public institutions, state taxpayers (or university stock holders, to be more cynical about it)—then President Gee’s description of students as *customers* may not seem so outrageous. Though teaching and research still continue in the University of Excellence, they do so within a systemic framework more suggestive of a Fortune 500 company than Plato’s academy or the Germanic University of Culture. For Readings, this shift is closely tied to the decline of the nation-state insofar as “the University is no longer primarily an ideological arm of the nation-state but an autonomous bureaucratic corporation” (40), an ideological arm, in

other words, of late consumer capitalism. Because its purpose can no longer be defined in terms of its dialectical relationship with state apparatuses, the University of Excellence leaves behind its modernist emphases on acculturation in favor of “pursuits of excellence” and quantifiable performance indicators.

In his description of the University of Excellence, Readings notes how the language used in university-produced documents often approximates language traditionally associated with corporate white papers and memorandums:

[F]or instance, the Office of Research and University Graduate Studies at Indiana University at Bloomington explains that in its Summer Faculty Fellowship program “Excellence of the proposed scholarship is the major criterion employed in the evaluation procedure.” This statement is, of course, entirely meaningless, yet the assumption is that the invocation of excellence overcomes the problem of the question of value across disciplines, since excellence is the common denominator of good research in all fields. (23-4)

Though excellence becomes the principal performance indicator in the supermodern university, it often does so without reference to other external standards. In this view, teaching and research in the disciplines must adhere to evaluation procedures in order to justify their worth and potential in the University of Excellence, procedures that are both internally regulated and externally influenced and assessed. The idea of excellence, therefore, becomes a quantifiable measuring stick against which students, instructors, programs, and even entire universities compare themselves. For Readings, the many college ranking magazines published each year offer some of the best illustrations of performance indicators in the University of Excellence. Though publications such as *U.S. News and World Report* and *Maclean’s* represent external evaluations, many of their criteria—including class size, grade point average, and student-teacher ratio—have as

well become internal performance indicators, suggesting complicity on the university's part with such quantifiable standards of excellence:

Categories as diverse as the make-up of the student body, class size, finances, and library holdings can all be brought together on a single scale of excellence. Such rankings are not entered into blindly or cavalierly. With a scrupulousness of which the academic community would be proud, the magazine devotes two whole pages to discussing how it produced its ratings. Thus, the student body in terms of incoming grades (the higher the better), grade point average during study (the higher the better), the number of 'out of province' students (more is better), and graduation rates within standard time limits (achieving normalization is a good thing). Class size and quality are measured in terms of the student-teacher ratio (which should be low) and the ratio of tenured faculty to part-time or graduate teaching assistants (which should be high). Faculty are evaluated in terms of the number with Ph.D.'s, the number of award winners, and the number and quantity of federal grants obtained, all of which are taken to be signs of merit. (24-5)

Such emphases on quantifiable performance indicators, Readings concludes, complicate modernist notions of an academy striving collaboratively to produce truth or knowledge for the benefit of an autonomous nation-state. In the present-day University of Excellence, "cost-benefit analysis structures not only the university's internal bookkeeping but also its academic performance (in terms of goal achievement) and the social bond with the University at large. The social responsibility of the University, its accountability to society, is solely a matter of services rendered for a fee" (32). As Stanley Fish argues repeatedly, the university's emphasis on cost-benefit analysis, more commonly associated with career-minded administrative professionals than with instructors or professors, ultimately affects how disciplines operate as *professional* communities. To be a professional, Fish writes, "is to think of oneself as motivated by something larger than marketplace conditions—by, for instance, a regard for justice or for the sanctity of human life or for the best that has been thought and said—even as that larger something is itself given shape and being by the very conditions it supposedly

transcends” (177). For Fish, transcending the complex interrelationships shaping the ideals and practices in interpretive or discourse communities is ultimately impossible; even when we advance arguments against professionalism in the academy, he suggests, we paradoxically affirm its existence and our complicities with it insofar as such arguments are necessarily dependent on some kinds of professional standards and assumptions. In terms of teaching and research in the University of Excellence, the rise of professionalism at virtually all levels of production “bring[s] about the increasing integration of functions so that research is non-referential. That is to say, the content of the research comes to matter less and less, as research is ever more indistinguishable from the mere reproduction of the system” (Readings 55).

Early in *The University in Ruins*, Readings confesses a certain bias in his analyses favoring the humanities; however, he qualifies this by positioning the natural sciences within the socio-political concerns informing research in contemporary American universities. In this sense, he sees the disciplinary lines separating the sciences and the humanities as arbitrary insofar as the sciences “take their often extremely powerful place in the University *by analogy* with the humanities” (4, emphasis his). In many recent descriptions of scientific inquiry, he notes, the contested status of knowledge “requires a model of knowledge as a *conversation* among a community rather than as a simple accumulation of facts” (5, emphasis his). Within the first-year writing course, such conversation metaphors often accompany descriptions of academic discourse and discourse communities, regardless of whether we refer to inquiry in the humanities, the social sciences, or the natural sciences (to borrow a common heuristic for the study of academic writing).

Given that the teaching of academic discourse often focuses on research assumptions and methodologies in the academy—and, in turn, how these assumptions and methodologies are then expressed in academic writing—the idea that the “content” of research matters less than the reproduction of a system complicates how composition imagines the production of discourse in the University of Excellence. While attempting to account for the fragmentation of the university into multiple disciplines addressing multiple purposes and assumptions, the idea of the discourse community, which has been so fundamental to the maturation of composition as a “legitimate” field of study, nevertheless serves to idealize and homogenize professionalism in the University of Excellence, creating in effect another imagined geography akin to composition’s other spatial metaphors. As Reynolds argues, over-privileging such imagined geographies may lead us to consider such spaces as pure ideation, as mimetic representations of real-and-imagined university space. Such imagined geographies, I would add, may similarly obfuscate the relationship between the supermodern university and the conditions of production in late capitalism, further masking the fact that such conditions contribute to the emergence of classroom space as non-place in the University of Excellence. In the next section, therefore, I argue that the privileging of academic discourse in first-year writing courses—wherein students are often pushed to appropriate the voice of the academy, “to speak as we do” (Bartholomae 623), so that they can one day take their places as discursive collaborators in the university’s on-going search for truth—constrains agency by narrowing the agent functions available to students to largely imagined spatial practices, thereby ignoring the complex spatial relations (re)producing academic discourse within the University of Excellence and, more broadly, within the

cultural, political, and economic conditions of supermodernity. Moreover, by situating the imagined geography of the discourse community within the communal and collaborative practices traditionally associated with the University of Culture (understood here as purely imagined space), compositionists further neglect the importance of space—real-and-imagined—in our everyday relations within the conditions of supermodernity. My point, however, is not to suggest that compositionists reorganize their pedagogies to reflect the insularity of inquiry in the University of Excellence—such rethinking, I think, would likely result in the emergence of yet another imagined geography without, again, addressing the production of space within the trialectics of spatiality. Rather, what I would like to emphasize is how the over-privileging of imagined space further constrains the agent functions available to students in first-year writing courses. In place of what Reynolds would call geographic literacy, where students learn to critically analyze how real-and-imagined space functions within systems of production, pedagogies designed around the idea of the discourse community promote the study and inhabitation of imagined geographies dependent upon an image of the university that, as Augé might suggest, “does not exactly match” (35) the one we actually work and dwell in everyday.

Discourse Communities as Imagined Geographies

The act of writing takes the student away from where he is and what he knows and allows him to imagine something else.

David Bartholomae (634)

In one of composition's seminal texts on the function and importance of discourse communities in the teaching of academic writing, Patricia Bizzell differentiates the teaching of academic discourse communities from the teaching of the "fundamental structures of thought and language," pedagogies most commonly associated with the early cognitivists (390). As Bizzell suggests, these two schools of thought—spatially resituated by Bizzell as outer-directed and inner-directed respectively—tend to disagree about the extent to which sociality contributes to a student's capacity to write, as Campbell would say, "in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one's community." Inner-directed theorists, Bizzell argues, "seek to discover writing processes that are so fundamental as to be universal" (389), whereas outer-directed theorists "believe that universal, fundamental structures can't be taught, [that] thinking and language use can never occur free of a social context that conditions them" (390).

Like many of the social constructionists who would follow her, Bizzell suggests that writing instruction is most effective and most responsible when it is outer-directed, when it seeks "to demystify the conventions of academic discourse communities" (392) and to thereby empower students to identify and inhabit, as Bartholomae might say, the privileged voice of the university. Drawing on the works of Noam Chomsky, William Labov, and Claude Lévi-Strauss (among others), Bizzell's conception of the discourse community is as a kind of anthropological place within the imagined space of the

University of Culture, embodying among its constituents a series of shared identities, relations, and histories:

Groups of society members can become accustomed to modifying each other's reasoning and language use in certain ways. Eventually, these familiar ways achieve the status of conventions that bind the group in a discourse community, at work together on some project of interaction with the material world. An individual can belong to more than one discourse community, but her access to the various communities will be unequally conditioned by her social situation. (388)

In place of inner-directed pedagogies that see sociality as an antecedent to “the structure of language-learning and thinking processes” (388), Bizzell offers an outer-directed imagined geography, “a country in which it is possible to learn the language and the manners and even ‘go native’ while still remembering the land from which one has come” (408). For Bizzell as well as for Bartholomae, composition programs designed around the teaching of academic discourse—in which students learn to “go native,” to inhabit the university’s privileged discourses—enable students to “make [an] argument, to do intellectual work of significance to the community, and hence, to persuade readers that you are a worthy co-worker” (392). In this sense, academic discourse communities are literally communal, working collaboratively within the shared space of the academy. As I argue in this section, however, the imagined geography of the discourse community is often expressive of (and possibly even dependent upon) an *image* of the contemporary university—as an institution charged with the acculturation of citizen subjects—that does not necessarily match the one we work and dwell in everyday. Consequently, by perpetuating this imagined geography, by asking students to adopt (or rather appropriate) the discourse of privilege sustaining that geography, as Bartholomae would argue, we risk further constraining agentive capacities in classroom non-place by limiting the agent

functions available to first-year writing students. As Ball might add, Bizzell's suggestion that students still remember the land from which they have come runs contrary to his experience teaching community-based inquiry where, when asked to reflect on their hometowns or local communities, students often respond initially with surprise or uncertainty having become accustomed to the de-contextualizing and de-historicizing tendencies in post-secondary education today.

In her discussion of outer-directed theories of writing, Bizzell concludes that “educational problems associated with language use should be understood as difficulties with joining an unfamiliar discourse community” (397) rather than as indicators of a student's incompetence or innate inferiority (406). In “Inventing the University,” Bartholomae extends this argument, suggesting that students who struggle to meet instructors' expectations do so because they lack the experience necessary to write with authority in academic discourse communities. “Every time a student sits down to write for us,” Bartholomae famously begins, “he has to invent the university for the occasion . . . 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” (623). For Bartholomae, the principal challenge facing first-year writing students is one of appropriation: “the student has to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and he has to do this as though he were easily and comfortably one with his audience, as though he were a member of the academy or an historian or an anthropologist or an economist” (624). In other words, the student, being a “traveler to an unfamiliar country” (Bizzell 408), has to enter an imagined community of which she is not a member—whose identities, relations, and

histories she does not share—and remain long enough to appropriate, or be appropriated by, its peculiar ways of speaking and writing, to become ultimately a worthy co-worker in the ongoing production of truth and meaning. Given these expectations, it's no wonder many students struggle “to speak [and write] as we do.”

Much like Bizzell, Bartholomae imagines the discourse community in largely spatial terms. It is a “setting” (625), he suggests, that we as instructors routinely “enter” (636), in which we imagine ourselves as “insiders” (631), communicating to one another through a series of shared “commonplaces” (626), specialized arguments that carry with them their own necessary elaboration (626). First-year writing students, on the other hand, are more often “shut out from” (628) the privileged “position” (626) of authority, at least initially, insofar as they tend to “locate” (637) themselves in “commonplaces” (637) “outside” (632) of those valued and preferred by constituents in the academy. Informing Bizzell and Bartholomae’s arguments concerning the need to demystify academic writing for student-travelers is the idea that rhetorical agency changes, and is often constrained, when students enter or attempt to enter foreign discourses. Becoming an insider takes time, they suggest, and there are bound to be moments when the student writer acts more like an out-of-towner than a native speaker:

It is very hard for them to take on the role—the voice, the persona—of an authority whose authority is rooted in scholarship, analysis, and research. They slip, then, into a more immediately available and realizable voice of authority, the voice of a teacher giving a lesson or the voice of a parent lecturing at the dinner table. They offer advice or homilies rather than “academic” conclusions. (Bartholomae 625)

“In order to speak as a person of status or privilege” in the university, Bartholomae continues, “the writer can either speak to us in our terms—in the privileged language of university discourse—or, in default (or in defiance) of that, he can speak to us as though

we were children, offering us the wisdom of experience” (627). According to Bartholomae, when students struggle to speak to us in the privileged language of academic discourse, they do so because they have not fully inhabited a persona of authority within that particular communal space. “All writers,” Bartholomae suggests, “in order to write, must *imagine* for themselves the privilege of being ‘insiders’—that is, the privilege both of being inside an established and powerful discourse and of being granted *special power to speak*” (631, *emphases mine*). Consequently, in order to “claim” rhetorical agency in this imagined geography, students must not only recognize that such communities exist in the first place, they must also learn their conventions and expectations, their peculiar ways of speaking and writing, well enough to play a role convincingly, “to crudely mimic the ‘distinctive register’ of academic discourse before they are prepared to actually and legitimately do the work of the discourse” (650).¹⁹

Though we may not immediately associate it with the terminal or even the material non-place of the classroom, the imagined geography of the discourse community may be understood in similar terms as a distinct form of non-place insofar as it (re)produces an image of space that is fundamentally removed from a cultural referent. As Augé observes, language often plays an important part in producing non-place, both in terms of its image and in terms of our relations to that image:

The link between individuals and their surroundings in the space of non-place is established through the mediation of words, or even texts . . . Certain places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are non-places, or rather *imaginary places*: banal utopias, clichés . . . Here the word does not create a gap between everyday functionality and lost myth: it creates the image, produces the myth and at the same stroke makes it work. (94-95, *emphasis mine*)

¹⁹ I emphasize “claim” here to illustrate what I see as Bartholomae’s implicit conception of agency as intrinsic to individuals rather than as a field of relations, existing outside of the agent, enabling and constraining agentic capacities.

For Augé, the language used to define and reify “imaginary places” is often mythic and metonymic, evoking—such as in the phrase “a week for two at a three-star hotel in Morocco” (95)—an image of Moroccan-ness, as Roland Barthes might say, that is ultimately idyllic or utopian. In terms of composition’s imagined geography—or non-place—of the discourse community, what is evoked in, and through, its various descriptions is *an image of place-ness*, fixed and inhabitable, where communal relations are developed and strengthened over time through the inhabitants’ shared reference to a sense of group identity and solidarity. In this respect, the idea of the discourse community appears contingent on a similar image of the contemporary university in which its purposes and practices are rooted in the “cumulative, collaborative nature of the scientific [and academic] enterprise” (Linton, Madigan, and Johnson 71), an image, in other words, of the cohesive University of Culture. As Readings argues, the University of Culture “draws its legitimacy” from a series of shared cultural or national referents based on the syntheses of “teaching and research, process and product, history and reason, philology and criticism, historical scholarship and aesthetic experience, the institution and the individual” (65). In the University of Culture, “object and process unite organically . . . which thus gives the people an idea of the nation-state to live up to and the nation-state a people capable of living up to that idea” (65). Though Bartholomae is not directly concerned with the acculturation of national subjects, his image of the discourse community nevertheless aims to centralize certain forms of thought and language within the imagined geography of the discourse community, thereby giving students *an idea* of the university to live up to—an idea, however, that may ultimately mythologize the imagined University of Culture at the expense of focusing on the real-

and-imagined University of Excellence produced within the conditions of
supermodernity:

And since students assume privilege by locating themselves within the discourse of a particular community—within a set of specifically acceptable gestures and commonplaces—learning, at least as it is defined in the liberal arts curriculum, becomes more a matter of imitation or parody than a matter of invention and discovery . . . I don't expect my students to *be* literary critics when they write about *Bleak House* . . . I do, however, expect my students to be, themselves, invented as literary critics by approximating the language of a literary critic writing about *Bleak House*. (Bartholomae 632-34, emphasis his)

For Bartholomae, discourse functions as a means to acculturate students as scholars—as literary critics, economists, anthropologists, or all three at once—to invent them, as he suggests, in terms conditioned by these imagined communities and our conceptions of their professional purposes, epistemological assumptions, and discursive practices. Emphasizing his image of the discourse community as a kind of anthropological place, complete with rituals and other communal habits, Bartholomae writes, “What our beginning students need to learn is to extend themselves, by successive approximations, into the commonplaces, set phrases, rituals and gestures, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion, obligatory conclusions and necessary connections that determine the ‘what might be said’ and constitute knowledge within the various branches of our academic community” (634). The risk in perpetuating imagined geographies such as the discourse community—to say nothing of the fact that such imagined geographies may become hegemonic by privileging intellectual colonization or appropriation over rhetorical invention—concerns how continued emphases on imagined space tends ultimately to flatten our understanding of the production of space—and the politics of space—by making it seem transparent and therefore inconsequential to the everyday practices of writing instruction. As Edward Said suggests in *Culture and Imperialism*, “Just as none

of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography.” By inhabiting imagined geographies, particularly when their conceptions of space are rooted in simulacra, in the image of a space that may never have existed in the first place, we risk ignoring how real-and-imagined space—including classroom non-place—matters in the ongoing production of power and relations in late capitalism.

Still, place—at least in the imagined sense—remains immanently important to Bartholomae. “Our students,” he says twice in the essay, “must have a place to begin” (645). In order to give students a place to begin, however, compositionists have imagined a geography of writing that is ultimately nonreferential to the present-day University of Excellence. In doing so, we have over-privileged the imagined at the expense of the real-and-imagined, or put differently, the imagined academy over the real-and-imagined spaces informing our students’ everyday relations within the conditions of supermodernity. In his readings of several sample placement essays, Bartholomae suggests that students who struggle to produce academic discourse do so because they become lost trying to inhabit the discourse of a voice they potentially recognize but cannot convincingly approximate (627). We might now add to this reading by suggesting that students come to imagined geographies such as the discourse community already immersed in real-and-imagined non-places, and therefore may be more capable of negotiating the accelerated velocities producing relations within the archipelago of non-places constituting contemporary (American) geographies than of inhabiting—imaginatively or otherwise—shared communal places. Already immersed in the non-place of the classroom and, more broadly, in the solitary and collectivizing conditions of

supermodernity, first-year writing students may, at the simplest level, be unprepared for the apparent disconnect between the more familiar instructional non-places surrounding them and the imagined communal geographies presented to them in the teaching of academic discourse. In any case, by leading students to inhabit imagined discourse communities, with the intent of asking them to imitate or approximate that space's privileged voice of authority, we may unintentionally lead students to believe that their usual determinants have no place, or do not matter at all, in the ongoing production of meaning and truth in the imagined geography of academic discourse.

As Ball might suggest, addressing the writing classroom's real-and-imagined position within the ongoing production of space in late capitalism is one way to reassert rhetorical agency in the increasingly de-contextualized scene of first-year writing instruction: "If teachers want students to excavate the complex spaces that shape our sense of identity as people, then we must expand our conception of spatiality to include networks of experience and sets of relations including—but also extending beyond—physical and geographical places" (173). By providing students the opportunity to critically assess the production of space in and around the composition classroom, compositionists may as well begin to recognize the uses and limitations of real-and-imagined non-place in the teaching of academic discourse, its capacity, in other words, to enable and constrain agency and agent functions. In the last part of this chapter, therefore, I propose an initial methodology for addressing the agentive capacities of non-place in the contemporary composition classroom—a methodology intended to promote geographic literacy through pedagogies designed to address and invite critical awareness of the production of space within the conditions of supermodernity.

Toward a Reassertion of Rhetorical Agency in Composition's Real-and-Imagined Non-Places

We erect temples to language, in which we are the priests among initiates (of varying degrees of enthusiasm), where we relive the rites of text-production for the *n*th time, despite the sad truth that the gods have fled so long ago that no one is even sure that they were ever there in the first place.

Geoffrey Sirc (2)

In “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class,” James Berlin overviews composition’s three principal rhetorics—cognitive, expressionistic, and social-epistemic—in terms of their ideological assumptions and conceptions of how power should be distributed in society (720). Whereas the former two rhetorics often attempt to disguise, or to refuse altogether, their ideological positions in the production of power, the latter works to self-consciously identify the complex social relations constituting knowledge, identities, and histories in late capitalist societies. For Berlin, therefore, social-epistemic rhetoric “attempts to place the question of ideology at the center of the teaching of writing. It offers both a detailed analysis of dehumanizing social experience and a self-critical and overtly historicized alternative based on democratic practices in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres” (735). Within social-epistemic rhetoric, Berlin situates Bizzell and Bartholomae (among others), suggesting that they “share a notion of rhetoric as a political act involving a dialectical interaction engaging the material, the social, and the individual writer, with language as the agency of mediation” (730). Even in their elaborations of the imagined geography of the discourse community, Berlin would suggest, Bizzell and Bartholomae maintain a largely social-epistemic

perspective by focusing on the “communities in which the self functions” (731); however, as I argue above, by focusing almost exclusively on imagined space, such rhetorics have the potential to reduce the importance of real or conceived space in the production of spatiality and, more generally, in the production of relations in late capitalism. Paradoxically, the flattening of space expressive of the over-privileging of imagined space, as Jameson might say, is precisely what social-epistemic rhetorics seek to avoid in the writing classroom.

In social-epistemic rhetoric, Berlin writes, “the real is located in a relationship that involves the dialectical interaction of the observer, the discourse community (social group) in which the observer is functioning, and the material conditions of existence” (730). In its pedagogies, however, social-epistemic rhetorics, including Bartholomae’s, may ultimately privilege a two-part dialectical relationship, involving the student-observer and the imagined discourse community of academic writing, over Soja’s three-part trialectic that takes into account the importance of material and discursive conditions in the production and reproduction of lived space. Still, as Berlin suggests, the possibility exists within social-epistemic rhetoric for a more complex understanding of relationality in writing pedagogies as involving, in somewhat different capacities, agents, contextuality (both real and imagined), and ideology. Nevertheless, if there is to be any potential for a reassertion of rhetorical agency in the first-year writing classroom, and more broadly within the conditions of supemodernity and its University of Excellence, compositionists must maintain a more balanced focus on the trialectics of spatiality producing real-and-imagined space, taking care, as Kevin Ball suggests, to fashion a theory of writing instruction that fully “imagines the implications of the linkages between

space, knowledge, and power for composition students within the intellectual work of the classroom” (168). In this final section, therefore, I examine two pedagogies, Geoffrey Sirc’s so-called radical expressivism and Ball’s community-based inquiry, in which the involvement of everyday experience in the writing classroom serves not only to balance the spatial, historical, and social enablers suggested in social-epistemic rhetorics but to also, and perhaps more importantly, offer students opportunities to formulate and present “explicit critiques of economic, political, and social arrangements” (Berlin 732) informing the productions of space in late capitalism.

Building on the work of early compositionists such as William Lutz and Charles Deemer—for whom the writing classroom was seen as an “undeniably rigid” (Deemer 121) obstruction constraining instructors and students to adapt and conform to the capabilities of the writing work space rather than to their own needs, ideas, or ambitions—Sirc argues for renewed focus on the everyday in composition theory and pedagogy. In *English Composition as a Happening*, he surveys many of the current conditions informing the teaching of academic writing, including its privileging of inhabitable discourse communities over the more uninhabitable material space of the classroom. In terms of the production of space both inside and outside of the composition classroom, Sirc’s radical expressivist rhetoric (being—much like Augé’s understanding of supermodernity as the excess of modernity—an accelerated version of expressivist rhetorics such as Peter Elbow’s) offers a critical analysis of the institutional limitations confronting students in classroom non-place as well as several possible alternatives that serve to make available additional agent functions expressive of a more

complete understanding of the production—and importance—of space within the “undeniably rigid” classrooms generally afforded first-year writing courses.

Though Sirc would likely resist direct comparisons to Berlin’s social-epistemic rhetoric—seeing it as yet another example of composition’s “material restraint,” its over-reliance on an immutable canon that ironically “trumpets the value of linguistic richness” (7)—his emphases on the writing student’s relations to the current traditions in the field as well as to the material scene of writing nonetheless correspond in many ways to Berlin’s sense of the socio-political dimensions informing relations in writing classrooms. In this sense, Sirc’s so-called radical expressivism works to overcome Berlin’s sense that expressivist pedagogies ignore, or at best disguise, their complicities within the production of power and ideology. In fact, I would argue, Sirc’s attempt to strike a balance among students’ everyday determinants, institutional pedagogies, and the socio-political constraints informing their capacities to write from and within the classroom suggests the sort of self-criticism characteristic of social-epistemic rhetorics:

Because designing spaces, I think, is what it’s all about. It’s a matter of basic architecture: Robert Venturi has shown that simplified compositional programs, programs that ignore the complexity and contradiction of everyday life, result in bland architecture; and I think the reverse is true as well, and perhaps more relevant for Composition: bland architecture (unless substantially *detoured*, as Lutz’s) evokes simplistic programs. The spaces of our classrooms should offer compelling environments in which to inhabit situations of writing instruction, helping intensify consciousness in the people who use them. (1-2)

Throughout *English Composition*, Sirc returns to architecture as his paradigmatic solution to what he sees as composition’s “curatorial pedagogies” (2) in which students, like patrons in an art museum, are constrained to a form of institutional connoisseurship that, in many composition courses, is ultimately privileged over unfettered exploration and artistic expression: “As instructors, our classroom activities combine the docent’s tour

(explaining how the great masterpieces are put together) with the hands-on workshop of family day (now that the gallery-goers understand how the masterpieces work, they get to try to make one). The scene of classroom writing is peculiarly overdetermined, then, as Gallery—as physical space in a larger institution (Museum/University), lying on the cusp between the curatorial and the commercial” (4).

Writing instructors, Sirc argues, “feeling *constrained* by the structural determinants of the spaces (even virtual ones) in which they practice” (4, emphasis mine), may do well to examine the anti-institutional polemics of neo-avant-garde artists, and in particular their transgressive compositional forms, such as Assemblages, Combines, and Happenings, that served in the late fifties and early sixties “to complicate the distinction between art and life” through “a re-appreciation of everyday material” (5). Put simply, Sirc wishes to “open Composition Studies up to the same urban responsibilities (and possibilities) as architecture” (187). For Sirc, this means borrowing from architecture’s (particularly postmodern architecture’s) utilitarian responsibilities and aesthetic possibilities.

Within postmodern architecture Sirc finds a populist rhetoric uniquely suited to composition classrooms where space is peculiarly overdetermined and, I would add, peculiarly over-imagined as well. In his discussion of Robert Venturi’s influential reading of the Las Vegas Strip as a new form of urban rhetoric embodying the cultural velocities of late consumer capitalism, Sirc identifies several parallels between high modernist architecture (against which postmodern architects such as Venturi worked) and composition’s modernist approaches to writing instruction. In pedagogies designed around the teaching of academic discourse, for instance, students are often discouraged

from using everyday commonplaces in place of academic conclusions—as Bartholomae suggests of one student’s sample, “the rhetoric seems invisible because it is so common,” because it “is located in a conventional rhetoric of the self” (639). As I note above, emphasizing imagined geographies at the expense of real-and-imagined or everyday experience contributes to the constraining of agency in classroom non-place insofar as such emphasis leads students to believe that place doesn’t matter and that their usual determinants are equally inconsequential:

Our students represent the grammar and lexicon of Main Street, of the Strip. The sign grammar of Vegas is theirs naturally. As such, they enter the puristic Greek Temples of our classrooms as exiles from Main Street, denied their verbal heritage, their textual homeland. We take away their status as writers immediately . . . Thus we raze the student landscape, until it is as flat as [Allan] Bloom’s ‘clean slate’; then we give them the blueprints for our temples and demand they (re)produce their new (already colonized) cityscape likewise. (Sirc 192-3)

In place of the everyday, which as Venturi acknowledges tends to favor “messy vitality” over “obvious unity” (qtd. in Sirc 189), composition substitutes the nonreferentiality of imagined geographies, complete with a series of shared commonplaces—identities, relations, and histories—that together compose the illusion of an inhabitable communal writing space. For Sirc, composition’s unwillingness to address the everyday in its current pedagogies is tied directly to its growth as a profession in what Readings would call the University of Excellence: “In figuring out our place among the disciplines, we have made the notions of disciplines paramount—what we talk about when we talk about writing is writing-in-the-academy or ‘real world’ writing that reflects (legitimizes) academic departments” (24-5). As in the contemporary University of Excellence, obvious unity in composition pedagogies is regularly preferred over messy vitality. In place of the everyday rhetorics of Main Street or the Strip—and, I would argue, Berlin’s

social-epistemic rhetoric as well—we surround students with the myth of academic discourse, that it “somehow constitutes individual empowerment; that accommodation to its ‘real world’ reality can allow students to position themselves comfortably (or more critically) (or, finally, more firmly?) in that choke hold; that it can, for example, wipe out the racial and gender realities of corporate glass ceilings” (Sirc 218). And while this myth surrounding academic writing and its imagined discourse communities enables composition to survive as a professional discipline in the supermodern University of Excellence, it nevertheless strays significantly from the forms of social and ideological critique possible in socio-epistemic rhetoric or, as Sirc might add, the rhetorics of everyday life.

Moving toward a reassertion of rhetorical agency in composition’s real-and-imagined non-places, therefore, requires compositionists to reconsider their students’ usual determinants, their “psychogeography” (210). Such attention, however, does not necessarily mean a return to outright expressivist paradigms. As Sirc suggests, focusing on the everyday—or more specifically on our students’ relations to the production of space within the conditions of supermodernity—may still involve more traditional forms of “academic” inquiry and writing: “The point doesn’t seem so much how we can get [students] to transfer that natural exuberance to their academic writing, as how we can get academic writing to restyle itself so as to better fit their exuberance” (200). By recognizing what matters to students beyond the sometimes “unreal” conditions of the composition classroom and the present-day University of Excellence, we may begin to see additional agent functions already available to students—and instructors—in classroom non-places. More specifically, by focusing writing pedagogies on real-and-

imagined communities rather than on imagined discourse communities, as Ball suggests, compositionists may illustrate “to students the ways in which place does matter” by establishing—as in the case of community-based inquiry—“a space in which to analyze the local alongside more traditional cultural critiques, adding a local dimension to broader cultural critiques” (168).

As one of many possible pedagogies suited to readdressing spatial politics in the composition classroom, Ball’s community-based inquiry serves to reconcile Sirc’s everyday rhetorics with more traditional modes of academic inquiry and argumentation by “conceiving of community inquiry as method and genre [that] encourages the skills of a literate and conscious citizenry beyond merely arguing, fostering exploratory as well as expository possibilities” (180). Echoing Sirc, Ball suggests that the contemporary university “appears as a boundless horizon for students, appearing to encourage them to leave what they know and how they know it behind them in the past” (184). As such, he argues, “teachers have a responsibility to recognize the spatial politics of writing instruction impinging on students” (184):

A critical pedagogy must begin with the fundamentals of students beginning to “see” and imagine their communities as sites and sources of meaning-making for their education within the university community. Rather than relegating writing about one’s community to the personal narrative segment of a course syllabus—a segment that may or may not include writing about one’s perceptual landscape—teachers need to conceive of community as the centripetal force around which all meaning and knowing is based. (184)

Unlike the largely imagined geography of the discourse community, “community” here aims to capture the complexity of real-and-imagined space by moving students to consider how familiar spaces (re)produce relations and agentic capacities through the interconnectedness of perceived, conceived, and lived space. For Ball, a first-year

writing pedagogy founded on community-based inquiry enables students to unearth “the boundaries, tensions, and significant locations within [communities], exploring identity in relation to time, space, and culture while asserting the role of classrooms and communities in informing one another” (180). In community-based inquiry, students learn to investigate the historical, social, and spatial dimensions producing relations within familiar geographies. For instance, a student from a small rural town recently contending with the sudden closing of its only textile mill may examine the conditions leading to the mill’s closure and its complex effects—spatial, historical, and sociological—on textile workers and their families in the area. Though it may take many shapes and satisfy many purposes, community-based inquiry, simply put, asserts the significance of place—real-and-imagined—in our everyday lives (183).

In Ball’s writing classes, “each student’s community serves as the primary site of inquiry, raising questions and prompting reflection: What does it mean to be a member of the lower middle class in the industrialized West? . . . How do individuals create a sense of place in Chicago? . . . What does it mean to be a Nebraskan? A Californian? A New Yorker?” (179). In this respect, community-based inquiry offers the kind of criticism suggested in Berlin’s social-epistemic rhetoric by keeping in focus the importance of space in economic, political, and social arrangements. By balancing our pedagogies to include the interrelatedness of spatiality, historicity, and sociality within the production of relations, compositionists may (paradoxically perhaps) reveal additional agent

functions—beyond that of the novice appropriated by academic discourse—available to student writers in classroom non-places:²⁰

As a result of their fieldwork within local communities, students—the true “workers” of the composition classroom—develop a voice both as writers and as unique individuals. This voice enables them to assert the necessary and integral relationship between education and local spaces within the composition classroom, and it is this voice that will enable them to continue to assert this meaningful relationship throughout their university education. (185)

By encouraging students to critically examine the sometimes disconnected relationship between community space and university and classroom non-place—to recognize how both are expressive of specific spatial, historical, and sociological conditions—we may begin to reassert agency within the writing classroom by encouraging students to recognize and work within the capacities or agent functions already present in the classroom’s field of relations. As Ball writes, “community inquiry invites writers to consider the role of local spaces in their personal development and the elements of place that continue to shape them, emphasizing the role education can and should play in prompting reflection on these meaningful—yet frequently overlooked—relationships” (169). In Sirc’s terms, the spaces within which students write and live are theirs already, providing compositionists a rich and diverse source of *topoi* from which to invent new—and, for Sharon Crowley at least, more rhetorical—pedagogies. Beyond the constraints suggested in the teaching of academic discourse, and in particular its privileging of the imagined geography of the discourse community at the expense of critical awareness of real-and-imagined classroom non-place in the present-day University of Excellence, community-based inquiry offers compositionists a spatially-minded pedagogy, where, as

²⁰ Quoting the philosopher Bernard Lonergan, Ball situates his definition of inquiry within a process that traditionally involves “the discovery of insight” (180). Insight, Lonergan writes, “comes as a release to the tension of inquiry” (qtd. in Ball 181).

Ball suggests, “teachers can assist students in ‘marking’ [neglected] spaces—making them visible, valuable, and viable within the intellectual work of the classroom” (185).

Chapter 4

Agency and the (Re)Production of Social Systems

A sort of inessential and originary solidarity, which precedes and exceeds cognition and volition, and which is the very condition of possibility for all determinate relations and all public deliberation, is precisely what *grants* rhetorical agency.

Diane Davis

In this thesis, I have argued for renewed attention to—and reconsideration of—rhetorical agency as a field of relations produced and reproduced within rhetorical space. As recent discussions of rhetorical agency illustrate, however, the poststructuralist and postmodernist legacy of the de-centered and agent-less subject still looms large, subsequently complicating how rhetoric conceives of action, including resistance and intervention, within rhetorical situations. In many ways, the apparent disconnect between poststructuralist and rhetorical theorizations of communicative events serves as a “sticking point” for some who see in the two traditions only difference and incongruity. Though it would be a mistake to argue for a complete resolution in which theories of indeterminacy finally reconcile with rhetoric’s more pragmatic concerns, what I hoped to show in this thesis is how we may begin to theorize a place for agency within rhetorical theory that takes into account some of the poststructuralist and postmodernist thinking that has in the last half century greatly informed and complicated our ontological and epistemological assumptions and, consequently, our ways of perceiving everyday relations. As John Louis Lucaites and Celeste Michelle Condit note, the rhetorical perspective offers an alternative to “living inside the absolute totality of modernism, or

living outside modernism in perpetual critique” (610). “The truth produced by rhetoric,” they observe, “is always provisional, good enough for daily use, but also open to challenge when necessary” (610). The rhetorical perspective, therefore, uniquely enables a re-visioning of agency, such as the one I’ve presented here, that is neither fully intrinsic to individuals, subjects, or agents nor fully extrinsic either:

Contemporary rhetorical theories can help to resolve the disparity between social structure and lived experience by reconstituting our understanding of agency as a function of complex-speaker-audience interactions. Such a view denies neither the materiality nor the significance of the agency of speaker or audience, but it does contextualize the agency of all parties to a social interaction as bound in relationship, rather than as the solitary product of some sort of determinism (be it economic or biological) or autonomous free will. (612)

Working from a similar understanding of agency as a contextualized field of relations producing communicative events, my goal for this thesis has been twofold: First, I wanted to bring together some otherwise disparate argumentative threads concerning agency after and within poststructuralist theory, synthesizing what I called a *both/and* conception of agency as both enabling and constraining action within a field of relations, in other words constituting subject positions, in the Althusserian sense, but also, as Herndl and Licona argue, maintaining agentive capacities through the production of specific agent functions. Second, I wanted to extend rhetoric’s understanding of the rhetorical situation, and the role of agency therein, by integrating agency within the production of space, by suggesting in fact that spatiality—along with historicity and sociality—matters significantly in constraining and enabling agency in rhetorical situations.

Additionally, by attempting to use rhetorical theory to inform the teaching of writing, I hoped to bridge a sometimes overlooked or unacknowledged gap between the

two disciplines. As Sharon Crowley argues in the Fall 2003 online issue of *Enculturation*, modern composition studies have moved so far away from rhetoric that “composition, as it has been practiced in the required first-year course for more than 100 years, has nothing whatever to do with rhetoric.” Certainly, this statement is open to debate. In any case, what Crowley calls for in the first-year writing course is renewed attention to more classical conceptions of rhetoric, that is as an art of invention, serving “to intervene in some way in social and civic discursive networks.” Similarly, in the same issue of *Enculturation*, Christina Farris argues that “composition probably least involves rhetoric when we have students only practicing discourse that we tell them is coming some time in their academic and professional futures, rather than engaging them in language use as part of meaningful action in the present.” With these criticisms in mind, I see community-based inquiry, based on the theory of social-epistemic rhetoric, as one possible means to both encourage students “to view themselves as the product of a unique time, place, and perceptual context” (Ball 169) and to reassert the role and importance of rhetoric in composition studies.

At the heart of my argument is the sense that, while much of rhetorical theory is firmly invested in spatiality, this interest remains narrowly focused on abstracted or imagined space, therefore privileging a single part of what Soja calls the trialectics of spatiality in which the interrelationships among real, imagined, and real-and-imagined space serve to produce relations within the conditions of late capitalism. From the Aristotelian *topoi* and Plato’s cave, to Althusserian subject positions and academic discourse communities, rhetorical theory remains greatly concerned with spatial metaphors; however, as I suggest in Chapter 3, over-privileging imagined space may

serve, paradoxically perhaps, to constrain the availability of potential agent functions. Thus, the first-year writing student, pushed to inhabit and appropriate the privileged voice of the academy suggested in the imagined geography of the discourse community, finds only limited agentive capacities—as Bartholomae suggests about a student struggling to compose an academic argument about “the mystery of human error,” “We get neither a technical discussion nor an ‘academic’ discussion but a Lesson on Life . . . The other brand of conclusion, the more academic one, would have required him to speak of his experience in our terms; it would, that is, have required a special vocabulary, a special systems of presentation, and an interpretive scheme (or a set of commonplaces) he could have used to identify and talk about the mystery of human error” (626). What’s potentially contradictory about such a statement—that over-privileging imagined space constrains the agent functions available to first-year writing students—is that it seems to once again locate agency as “a will to act” *intrinsic to* individuals (in this case, rhetorical theorists and compositionists), thereby undoing Herndl and Licona’s resituation of agency as a field of relations operating *outside of* the agent and within the productions of rhetorical space.

If we consider the production of agency in rhetorical space as recursive, as coming into being through a multiplicity of relations constituting and constituted by their shared integration within dynamic systems, then we may begin to see how agents affect, and are affected by, the field of relations (re)produced in communicative events. In *Central Problems in Social Theory*, Giddens complicates structuralist and poststructuralist theories of signification—which he sees as closed systems of representation, lacking reference to social practices—by proposing what he calls the

duality of structure, “which relates to the *fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency*” (69, emphasis his). For Giddens, the duality of structure maintains “that the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems” (69). In other words, agents embedded in social systems are both makers and made insofar as they participate in the production of relations, actions which in turn rearticulate the agentive capacities producing relations within dynamic social systems. To illustrate, Giddens turns to language use as the principal force maintaining relations within the system of language, suggesting that, as a system, language is reproduced through utterance and that, reciprocally, utterance produces additional opportunities for agents always already embedded in the recursiveness of relations within that system:

The duality of structure relates the smallest item of day-to-day behavior to attributes of far more inclusive social systems: when I utter a grammatical English sentence in a casual conversation, I contribute to the reproduction of the English language as a whole. This is an unintended consequence of my speaking the sentence, but one that is bound in directly to the recursiveness of the duality of structure. (78)

Agents, Giddens maintains, retain the capacity to intervene in the on-going (re)production of social systems; however, such interventions, he argues, may themselves serve recursively to constrain or enable further agentive capacities within systems of relations. If we envision the production of agency as a recursive process, as Giddens suggests, then we may begin to see how agents constituted in specific agent functions in turn affect the reproduction of those functions and, subsequently, their availability and usefulness within dynamic social systems. Such awareness, I would argue, suggests several consequences for conceptions of agency within rhetorical space, first and

foremost being the agent's capacity to contribute to the further constraining and enabling of agency in social space.

Of course, what's presented here offers only a provisional conception of agency as integral to spatiality and the production of relations. Though my focus here has remained largely concerned with non-place, there are many additional directions we may take as we continue to address agency and spatiality concurrently in rhetorical theory. In several recent descriptions of non-place, including Marc Augé's, Andrew Wood's, and Grant Boswell's, we get the sense that agency—and even rhetoric—are fundamentally absent and consequently impossible within the de-historicized and eternal present of non-place. In "Non-Places and the Enfeeblement of Rhetoric in Supermodernity," Boswell expands on Augé's closing pages in which Descombe's concept of "rhetorical territory" serves to further accent for Augé the extreme sensations of displacement expressive of supermodernity's non-places, of being immersed in a communicative event *other than* that suggestive of anthropological place. For Descombe, the rhetorical territory is "where one engages in making a 'plea, accusation, eulogy, censure, recommendation, warning, and so on' in ways that are easily accessible to others in the same place" (Boswell). In non-places, however, by virtue of their functions as utilitarian space within the accelerated conditions of supermodernity, "one never inhabits this kind of rhetorical territory," so communication expressive of the shared identities, relations, and histories of anthropological place remains elusive. For Boswell, then, "non-places in supermodernity enfeeble rhetorical territories because the discourse of non-places addresses no one in particular."

What I have argued here, however, suggests a more optimistic future for rhetoric in non-place, at least insofar as agents—seen here as participants in the (re)production of space and agency—retain some capacity to resist or, perhaps more accurately, to intervene in the reciprocity of relations producing and reproducing agentive capacity in non-place. Nonetheless, extending and complicating the ideas presented here may further develop rhetoric’s understanding of agency in relation to contextual enablers—be they spatial, historical, or sociological. In particular, future research may focus more specifically on how agent functions change among similar utilitarian spaces. In my discussion of the composition classroom, for instance, I focused primarily on more traditional classroom settings; however, as is often the case in first-year writing programs, composition coursework includes at least some instructional time in computer classrooms, a spatial shift that may have potentially significant effects on how we teach writing in these classrooms and, conversely, the kinds of writing students produce there. Related to this, further research may—and likely should—explore how differences among spatial inhabitants contribute to the enabling and constraining of agency in rhetorical space. As Campbell argues, theories of subjectivity and agency, while important to rhetorical and social inquiry, must resist the tendency to perpetuate homogeneous conceptions of identity and action, a challenge that often confronts feminist theorists when they work to critique and resist essentialism, which, as Campbell argues, tends to treat “diverse individuals, such as women, as if they were identical based on socially constructed categories” (6). An adequate theory of agency within rhetorical space, then, must take into account the role of difference in the production and reproduction of relations. Revisiting the oppositional methodologies suggested in

feminist theory, and in particular in US Third World feminist theory, may specifically inform our understanding of agency within the trialectics of spatiality through what Gloria Anzaldúa might describe as “borderland politics” in which the position of difference—of hybridity or heterogeneity—enables agentive capacities to critique and deconstruct dominant ideologies even while inhabiting constituted subject positions within a dynamic system of relations.

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