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Embodied Censorship: Academic Writing Rituals and the Production of Belief

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Abstract: As compositionists have constructed a critical discourse on whiteness, they have tacitly theorized how students' bodies can stifle efforts to both reflect on unfamiliar beliefs and critique their own beliefs. While Composition's latent theories of "embodied censorship" challenge the notion that rationality or empathy can enable one to transcend one's own body and thereby fully engage Others' beliefs, they also divorce the body-belief dialectic from everyday social-material practices and conditions of production. Embodied censorship is represented not as a local process but as an abstracted product, with different forms of censorship tied to corresponding types of reified bodies. Pierre Bourdieu's and Jennifer Seibel Trainor's work, when synthesized, present an alternative theory. Bourdieu and Trainor illuminate how bodies, beliefs, and embodied censorship are dialectically, processually produced in everyday social-material practices, such as academic writing rituals. Their materialist social theory can help compositionists design pedagogies that approach academic writing rituals as a site for reworking embodied censorship and enabling students to understand unfamiliar beliefs.

One could endlessly enumerate the values given body, made body, by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy which can instill a whole cosmology, through injunctions as insignificant as 'sit up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand', and inscribe the most fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of a culture in seemingly innocuous details of bearing or physical and verbal manners.

—Pierre Bourdieu, "Belief and the Body," in *The Logic of Practice*

Compositionists who swim in Michel Foucault's wake might have a difficult time taking Bourdieu on his own terms. Indeed, one popular Foucauldian maxim is that it is impossible to take a text on its own terms, because, despite your best intentions, you cannot *not* take the text on your own terms. There is no "primary" text to be had. Since knowledge is an expression of power, your knowledge of the text has more to do with your relation to power, your "subject position" and your cultural-political interests, than with the text itself. Your attempt to read the text on its own terms, like your attempt to know the truth of anything, is governed by current formations of power-knowledge and their discourses or "regimes" of truth, none of which are truer than the others. The one exception to the rule of power-knowledge is what Foucault calls "subjugated knowledges," those insurrectionary knowledges that have been elided or fragmented by normative epistemologies and the domination of power-knowledge. Spontaneous and fleeting, subjugated knowledges attest to past resistance against domination and enable future resistance insofar as they avoid the self-abolition that would come if they aspired to join or become a new regime of truth. Returning to the epigraph above, a Foucauldian might interpret Bourdieu as claiming that patterns of behavior like posture and table manners are outward manifestations of the discipline tacitly demanded by a regime of truth or a particular formation of power-knowledge. Producing subjects and suturing them into disciplined positions, power-knowledge manifests itself in the regulation of the body, and regulation of the body is a local symptom-cause of domination. Subjugated knowledges, tactically appropriated as a "technology of the self," might enable the individual subject to disrupt the operation of power-discipline and temporarily avert domination.^{1}

Bourdieu's insights into the dialectical relationship between the body, values, and beliefs are worth freeing from the discipline of a Foucauldian interpretation. To begin, Bourdieu never argues that regulation of the body is identical with domination. Unlike Foucault, Bourdieu argues that resistance to domination is often just as regulated and disciplined as complicity with the powers that be. Resistance emerges as people's beliefs and dispositions undergo

a process of deep change, and, for Bourdieu, deep change does not come through local outbursts of democratic energy or radical pronouncements. As the epigraph suggests, beliefs emerge in concert with repeated bodily action. Patterns of behavior “make body” a set of values, which can render persuasive a “whole cosmology,” a whole belief system, which then reinforces current behaviors. Resistant beliefs, just like complicit or reactionary beliefs, become “second nature” through prolonged participation in social-material practices, namely the rituals and routines of a particular field of activity. Any real threats to the dominant cosmology will come through changes in those routines and rituals – through a prolonged “countertraining, involving repeated exercises” (Bourdieu, *Pascalian* 172)—*not* through temporary disruptions of discipline and power-knowledge. From a Bourdieusian perspective, social movements and protests, while they might appear to be spontaneous and are no doubt overdetermined, are primarily the result of rigorous organization and longer-running changes in participants’ habits and everyday existence. An emergent, resistant belief system—one that is emotionally and rationally persuasive – takes a long time to become embodied because residual cosmologies, which can censor new or unfamiliar beliefs, are never quick to loosen their grip on one’s second nature. Belief and the body are profoundly interanimated and interanimating. This paper considers what Bourdieu’s body-belief dialectic can contribute to Composition’s critical discourse on whiteness and anti-racist pedagogy.

While it is possible to see racial injustice in the color of the bodies that populate hierarchized sites of literacy education, it is just as possible to hear racial injustice in the colored beliefs that some privileged sites produce. Although literacy instructors cannot change the bodily make up of their classrooms, they can create opportunities for students to use writing to consider unfamiliar alternative beliefs and thereby light up their own beliefs’ assumptions and stakes. However, as Bourdieu suggests, deeply held beliefs can be resistant to literate reflection and rational transformation, especially when “counterthinking” is not part of a wider “countertraining.” This paper argues that such “countertraining” should be informed by a working theory of how values and beliefs come to be embodied in everyday practices and how these deeply-ingrained values and beliefs come to stifle critical reflection on one’s own and others’ beliefs. A working theory of such *embodied censorship* should illuminate: 1) how “an implicit pedagogy,” encompassing academic writing rituals, can “make body” certain cultural values, 2) how these embodied cultural values can render particular beliefs and a “whole cosmology” persuasive, and 3) how deeply embodied values and beliefs can undermine students’ abilities to read and write about unfamiliar beliefs.

As compositionists have constructed a critical discourse on anti-racist pedagogy and whiteness, they have tacitly theorized how students’ and instructors’ bodies can stifle efforts to reflect on and transform beliefs. In what follows, I identify two strands of such latent theorizing, which I call “the rhetoric of bodies” and “critical philosophies of whiteness.” The first strand has emerged from Foucauldian inquires into how writers are sutured into discursively produced subject positions (e.g., white, Black, queer, feminine, fat) and how these different subject positions, typically discussed as body types, shape students’ thoughts and experiences. The second strand has supplemented the first’s focus on discourse and positionality with a novel focus on affect or *pathos*. Critical philosophies of whiteness explore how racial identity and beliefs are constituted by emotions, psychosocial relations, and the aesthetics of whiteness. As I explain below, both strands have made fruitful contributions to Composition’s critical whiteness discourse. However, both strands tend to divorce the body and its beliefs from everyday social-material practices, namely the rituals of academic writing. Aside from general critiques of the white privilege built into ideologies of standard English, these strands have not seriously investigated how exploratory writing, critical reading, summarizing, citational practices, and other academic literacy practices function in the *production* of embodied censorship and white beliefs. This gap in the scholarship should be particularly troubling for a discipline whose primary object of inquiry and primary site of praxis is the composition classroom, in which academic writing rituals are daily performed and discussed. After explaining how both strands evade the question of production—the question of how bodies, beliefs, and embodied censorship are dialectically, processually produced through practice—I outline a materialist social theory of the (conditions of) production of embodied censorship and white beliefs. I conclude by considering how such a theory can inform how we rework academic writing rituals so that these rituals might “make body” alternative values and beliefs—values and beliefs that might challenge the dominant racial cosmology.

The Rhetoric of Bodies: Or, The Foucauldian Theology of Race

During the early years of Composition’s appropriation of critical whiteness studies, compositionists tended to represent the reified white body as the wellspring of white beliefs. Invoking post-structuralist terminology, these studies drew bold lines between different types of bodies or “subject positions,” often using metaphors of physical impairment, ancestry, and genetics in order to explain differences in belief systems and in order to ascertain the possibility of transforming those beliefs (see below for examples). On one hand, the rhetoric of bodies brought much needed attention to the fact that differentially marked bodies do indeed experience and make sense of social reality in very different ways. The rhetoric of bodies effectively challenged the liberal humanist notion that one can stand in

an Other's shoes, so to speak—what Iris Marion Young critically calls the ideal of “symmetrical reciprocity” (39-41). On the other hand, despite its promise to challenge both the pseudo-religious notion that God created eternally distinct races of humankind (theological determinism) and the pseudo-scientific notion that one's “blood” constitutes one's beliefs (biological determinism), the rhetoric of bodies tacitly reinforced these easily derided ideologies: talk of God was replaced with talk of discourse, and talk of “blood” was replaced with talk of subject positions. Although it appeared as if an alternative to the old ideologies had been found, the new theoretical coordinates were only nominally different, and the causal arrows were all pointing in the same direction. In the Foucault-inspired theology of race, one must have faith that discourse, like God, produces different types of bodies and that “blood”-determined subject positions produce body-appropriate thoughts and experiences. One must believe that the subject's “positionality” produces its epistemology, restricting how and what the subject can understand and believe (see Notes, #5). The following rhetorical analysis of Composition's early critical whiteness discourse will reveal that the productive power of discourse was, like God, rarely questioned or rigorously defended. With the power of discourse tacitly accepted and thus off the page, body types came to the fore in the scholarship, appearing as the main producer of beliefs—the “base” from which epistemological “superstructures” were created, to borrow the terms of vulgar Marxism.^[2]

Ian Marshall and Wendy Ryden's widely discussed *College Composition and Communication* dialogue on race and whiteness is one example of the rhetoric of bodies as it is deployed in a problematic theory of embodied censorship. For example, after a sympathetic critique of the notion that “whites have become more like the machines they make” whereas “blacks ... [have maintained] a particular kind of power connected to the life force” (246), the self-identified Black England-born man (Marshall) argues that white teachers'

identities are, for the most part, constructed on white supremacy; that is, it is both a reality and a truth for them that they are white and therefore able to carry cultural capital in their *very being*. To pull at the strings that would unravel this white supremacy would subsequently unravel these teachers' own identities and lives and, in turn, unravel the very fabric of what we call U.S. culture and society. They cannot do it because that would be *suicide*. (246, emphasis added)

In Marshall's formulation, the white body can become conscious and critical of its constitutive beliefs only as it moves toward its own death. One can only “unravel” one's deeply ingrained beliefs once one has “unraveled” one's own body. This is so, according to Marshall, because the racialized body produces and delimits beliefs about race. The fact that Marshall is speaking metaphorically and provocatively does not negate the force of his argument's gist, which is that one *thinks* white—one cannot think “unwhitely” (“pull at the strings”)—because one's “very being,” one's body, *is* white. As I explain later, Marshall and Ryden tacitly argue that static types of bodily being (such as the “Black body” and the “white feminine body”) produce distinct beliefs about race and gender. Notwithstanding its allusions to discourse and subject positions, their dialogue represents the body as divorced from the social-material practices and processes in which beliefs and censorship come to be embodied and in which bodies can change their whole cosmologies. In short, Marshall and Ryden evade the question of production—of how embodied censorship is produced – by unconsciously answering it with the rhetoric of bodies.

My concern over the rhetoric of bodies' theory of embodied censorship, and this rhetoric's unconscious answer to the question of production, is not new. In a seminal 1995 *College English* article, AnnLouise Keating warned against representing whiteness as a category of bodily being that produces white beliefs. While recognizing the need for critical conceptualizations of whiteness, Keating sensed that compositionists might “inadvertently reconstruct [race] by reinforcing the belief in permanent, separate racial categories” (902), each with their own beliefs. Keating continues: “Although [critical theorists] emphasize the artificial, politically and economically motivated nature of all racial classifications, their continual analysis of racialized identities undercuts their belief that ‘race’ is a constantly changing sociohistorical concept, not a biological fact” (902). She perspicaciously notes that it is easy to take for granted our overcoming of yesteryear's pseudo-biological and pseudo-religious theories of race, and that such confidence makes it all the easier for these outdated theories to survive and thrive in new “critical” discussions of race. Keating knew that discursive shifts away from the socio-historical (the emergent) and back toward the pseudo-biological or pseudo-religious (the residual) would not be explicit in critical discourses that pride themselves on offering alternatives to archaic theories of race. A piece of academic writing might shift from the socio-historical to the pseudo-biological without the writer's consent or awareness, especially if the audience's interpretive framework was still unconsciously organized by archaic theories of race. Such backsliding could be enabled and made palatable by new terminology deemed “radical.”

Consider one of Juanita Comfort's white graduate students who, after asking herself why she cannot comprehend June Jordan's decision to sympathetically identify with boxer Michael Tyson, replies to herself through the rhetoric of bodies' theory of embodied censorship: “perhaps I am constitutionally incapable of seeing or hearing what you [Jordan] are saying. Perhaps it is, as my African American classmates suggest, the myopia that accompanies white

skin. This is my limitation, my visual impairment" (Comfort 548). The white graduate student "cannot see [Jordan's] point ... but ... can see that she has one" (548). Notice how the student identifies her bodily constitution and her white skin as both the sources of her embodied censorship and the determiners of her beliefs. It is not just the "myopia that accompanies white skin" but her whole bodily being that inhibits her from understanding Jordan's beliefs and working through her own (the student's) blind spots. The student is the victim of an epistemological impairment that she equates with her real, physical farsightedness (she literally needs to wear glasses), which, like her skin, is unchangeable. One could argue that the student is being self-consciously metaphorical, and that she is *really* referring to how discourses create positionalities, how positionalities create epistemologies, and so forth. But the student's metaphor lacks a tenor: there is no rigorous, explicit discussion of the productive power of discourse, here or in other pieces of Composition's whiteness scholarship. Even if there was, the metaphor would nonetheless suggest an intractable discourse and a static subject position. And if we are going to champion the use of metaphors in conceptualizing positionality, should we not be critical of the metaphors we choose, particularly the physiological metaphors that resonate with archaic theories of race? It is, of course, important for all students to grasp that no one can wholly stand in someone else's shoes and that Others' experiences are always difficult to understand. But when students and writers begin to feel out their epistemological limits, do we want them to metaphorically liken these limits to physical impairments or genetics, and then have them engage texts more appropriate for their body type or "positionality"? I would hope the conversation does not end there. While we can never know the whole story, Comfort's article suggests that we should applaud this graduate student's revelation about the censorship that her reified body imposes on her beliefs, as if it would be naïve to have students work through and overcome the epistemological limitations symbolized by their "farsightedness" or skin color.

Marshall and Ryden's interrogation of whiteness mirrors this graduate student's internal dialogue about the relationship between bodies and beliefs. At an early point in their conversation, Ryden (white American woman) asks Marshall, "What [can we make of situations in which] white liberal teachers attempt to have discussions of racism that non-white students refuse to participate in?" (Marshall and Ryden 241). Translation: what happens when white bodies try to discuss non-white beliefs with non-white bodies? Instead of answering, Marshall immediately replies with another rhetoric-of-bodies question: "When white teachers say they have gained the trust of their minority students, what do they mean? What do the students understand by this gaining of trust" (241). Translation: what do white bodies mean when they say that non-white bodies believe in them, and how do the non-white bodies understand this? These questions are no doubt important—indeed, they motivate my research—but their value is undermined by Marshall and Ryden's tendency to toss them back and forth in a vacuum. Without considering any substantial contextual information other than their imaginary individuals' reified body types and one-dimensional circumstances, Marshall and Ryden can quickly arrive at the conclusion that white teachers (white bodies) cannot teach non-white students (non-white bodies) *anything* (253).^[3] As in Comfort's student's comments, there is a troubling belief here that deep and interminable differences divide humanity along the lines of body types, and that these divisions transcend history and fundamentally circumscribe one's beliefs.

Ryden says as much when she, off the cuff, suggests that white educational theorists should restrict themselves to scholarly inquiries related to being-white-in-the-world. For Ryden, the questions that should guide such pedagogical research for and by white people are as follows: "What can the white teacher learn about the racism of white America? What can she teach her white students about their white racism?" (Marshall and Ryden 253). These questions presume that white bodies trans-historically and trans-contextually produce insurmountable limits to their own acquisition and transformation of beliefs, and that this form of embodied censorship is researchable and knowable, as if it were encoded in white DNA, waiting to be mapped. What is most troubling is that any conclusions derived from such research would need to be spoken through the rhetoric of bodies, thus reaffirming the questionable foundation upon which such questions are asked and upon which such a theory of embodied censorship is formulated. There would be no escaping the self-perpetuating rhetoric of bodies. Here, I am not making yet another tired argument against "essentialism." Instead, I am arguing against this scholarly dialogue's primary (and perhaps only) shortcoming, which is reflective of popular discourse on race: the facile representation of the dialectical relationship between bodies and beliefs—a representation that is compounded, not improved, by vague allusions to the productive power of discourse and positionality.

Racial identity is not the only form of embodied censorship that Marshall and Ryden articulate through the rhetoric of bodies. Midway through their conversation, Marshall informs Ryden that a

white female teaching non-white students represents a kind of contradiction. On the one hand, you are female and therefore you represent a kind of powerlessness. On the other hand, you are white and therefore you represent power. What are the implications of interrogating whiteness in this situation? (247)

One might ask: what situation? By "situation," Marshall means yet another abstract arrangement of body types.

Ryden replies negatively, not only critiquing the sentimental notion that plantation-dwelling white heiresses had a special connection with enslaved Africans because both suffered under white patriarchy, but also questioning the far more troubling argument that this “special connection” would make *contemporary* white women less encumbered by whitely embodied censorship and thus more capable of critically teaching today’s non-white students. Marshall, insisting on the special trans-historical connection between different oppressed body types, rejects Ryden’s rebuff, arguing that today’s women are more capable because “the mistress [was] more aligned—has more in common with—the slaves on the plantation than with the white master” (247).^[4]

And yet, it is not Marshall’s one-dimensional “situation” or his trans-historical reasoning that is most problematic, but rather the formal structure of his arguments—a form that can be found in many “critical” texts on race as well as in public discourse. These arguments *begin* with a “situation” comprised of abstract bodies (the white female body as teacher and non-white bodies as students, for example) and *end* with sweeping generalizations about the nature of these bodies’ beliefs and epistemologies.^[5] For example, what begins as speculation about the similarities between white women and Black slaves ends with the assertion that contemporary “[w]hite women are provided with more opportunities to *think thoughts of non-whiteness* and to align themselves with others who might interrogate it” (Marshall and Ryden 247, emphasis added). As in vulgar Marxism’s short-circuiting of the relationship between the economic “base” and the cultural-political “superstructure,” there are no practical mediations between the beginning-base (bodies) and the end-superstructure (beliefs).

Marshall’s argumentative structure and conclusion are representative of the form and content of the rhetoric of bodies, which constitutes a theory of embodied censorship in which one’s abstract bodily being produces and delimits—*censors*—one’s beliefs. Perhaps more than any other piece of critical whiteness discourse in Composition, Marshall and Ryden’s dialogue neglects Keating’s warning against reifying racial categories of bodies and representing them as the eternal founts of belief, again, notwithstanding the allusions to discourse and subject positions. The fact that Ryden and Marshall temper most of their arguments in the dialogue’s reflection section does not rectify the significant blind spots in their latent theory of embodied censorship. In neglecting Keating’s warning and tacitly relying on the Foucauldian theology of race, the dialogue evades the question of how bodies, beliefs, and embodied censorship are all dialectically, processually produced in everyday social-material practices, such as the composition classroom’s academic writing rituals, which I turn to later.

In concluding this section, it is worth returning to Keating’s article because it too unconsciously articulates the rhetoric of bodies by representing particular beliefs as the product of particular body types, even as it tries to challenge that rhetoric’s theory of embodied censorship. Keating assumed that her students’ resistance to challenging the rhetoric of bodies (e.g., the idea that whites can only think whitely) was caused by binary thinking, which “oversimplifies and conflates literary representations of ‘whiteness’ and ‘white’ people with real-life human beings classified as ‘white’” (909). The act of breaking free from the tyranny of binary thinking is what, according to Keating, will enable students to resist presuming that white bodies cannot think non-white thoughts. Keating then suggests that binary thinking can be challenged by calling attention to the fact that many North Americans are biracial and multiracial. She writes: “the suggestion that we can automatically identify ourselves and others according to ‘race’ assumes that we are fully cognizant of our *ancestry*” (910, emphasis added). The more racially mixed the body’s “blood” is, and the more people become aware of their blood’s mixed-ness, Keating suggests, the more open they will be to breaking binaries, considering counter-hegemonic beliefs, and recognizing racial injustice. Symptomatic of the Foucauldian theology of race, Keating’s post-structural binary-breaking leads her toward the very pseudo-biological theories of race that she initially warns against. In a vein more pluralistic than Marshall and Ryden, she tacitly argues that the biologically “mixed” body can produce racially “mixed” beliefs. Our (potential) beliefs are in our blood.

Critical Philosophies of Whiteness: Or, Obfuscating the Question and Conditions of Production

Although an ensuing second wave of whiteness studies jettisoned the base-superstructure model of bodies and beliefs in order to explore the dialectical interplay of white beliefs and white bodies, many of these studies located the body-belief dialectic *not* in determinate fields of social activity (e.g., high schools, first-year composition classrooms, and other institutions) but rather in quasi-poetic social spaces where abstracted manifestations of racial oppression interacted with personal memories, experiences, and affects. Perpetuating the first strand’s inattention to everyday social-material practices, these studies explored how cultural logics, racial tropes, and whitely dispositions created and responded to pre-rational, haunting feelings of shame, guilt, and loss, which prevented whites from truly listening to Others’ beliefs and performing antiracism (see Ratcliffe, Kennedy et al., and Condon). Evidence that this wave is still cresting can be found in Tammie M. Kennedy, Joyce Irene Middleton, and Krista Ratcliffe’s 2013 call for proposals for an edited collection named “Haunting Whiteness,” which promises to conceptualize whiteness as “a

ghost, a haunting, which feeds on invisibility, nostalgia, and melancholy.” This second strand’s latent conceptions of embodied censorship take the form of critical philosophies of whiteness, what Moishe Postone helpfully distinguishes from critical social theories, which, first, link their critical concepts (“whiteness,” for example) “to a social and historical analysis of the empirical phenomena to which [the] criticism refers” and, relatedly, consider how their concepts’ conditions of production are inscribed within the concepts themselves—conditions which might motivate an inattention to productive labor and concrete practice (379-80). Composition’s second-wave whiteness studies are critical philosophies of whiteness insofar as they locate the body-belief dialectic in other-worldly realms and refract the working conditions of university intellectuals, who have a vested interest (albeit an often unconscious and ultimately detrimental one) in obfuscating both their apartness from productive labor and this apartness’s impact on the fruits of their conceptual labor (Bourdieu, *Pascalian* 24). In what follows, I review and critique one exemplary critical philosophy of whiteness, highlighting how inattention to the question of (the conditions of) production ends up limiting this philosophy’s ability to both theorize embodied censorship and contest the production of white beliefs.

There is much to admire in Frankie Condon’s 2012 monograph, *I Hope I Join the Band*. Challenging the rhetoric of bodies, she urges compositionists “[t]o recognize whiteness as a constellation of epistemological and rhetorical practices rather than an ontological condition of raced-white consciousness” (Condon 76; on “whiteness,” see Frye as well as Condon 34, 55). In other words, white beliefs are not inherently and permanently ingrained in the white body’s blood-born consciousness. Condon also questions the assumptions underlying Marshall and Ryden’s debate over non-white students’ ability to learn from white teachers. In a sentence worth repeating, she urges whites “to probe the question of whether, how, and to what degree the fear of hurting people of color by speaking openly and critically of race and racism are expressions of whitely paternalism conditioned by implicit convictions about the weakness and vulnerability of peoples of color” (115). That is not to say teachers should ignore non-white students’ quiet protests or visible anxieties—feelings potentially provoked by a white teacher’s very presence—but rather that all teachers should question the emotioned limits that they place on their own capabilities and responsibilities. Indeed, Condon is very concerned with the emotional dimension of anti-racist work. She explores how shame, anger, apathy, pride, and joy shape “rational” critical engagements with racism and whiteness. Finally, Condon repeatedly urges compositionists to inquire into the everyday institutional dynamics of racism and whiteness—the conditions of the production of whitely dispositions.

However, despite her call to inquire into whiteness’s sources and effects within, across, beneath, and above institutions (Condon wields a multitude of prepositions), her monograph is less concerned with theorizing the production of “whiteness” and more concerned with *describing* whiteness and encouraging readers to be not so whitely. Although she provides rhetorical tactics for contesting whiteness, Condon does not link these tactics to the actual, processual production of whiteness in social-material practice. Disarticulated from practical conditions of production, her tactics not only fail to go to the root of the problem (i.e., they contest whiteness but not the conditions of production of whiteness) but also constitute a form of consciousness raising that is for and by university intellectuals like herself, with lesser viability and value the farther one moves from the material conditions of scholarly debate. These limitations, characteristic of critical philosophies of whiteness, can be discerned in Condon’s discussion of “whiteness.”

Condon theorizes whiteness as an affective form of what I have been calling embodied censorship. First, whiteness confuses “will, desire, and energy” for “readiness” (Condon 11). The self-righteous whitely white feels that he or she does not need to prepare for anti-racist work, that he or she can “just do it.” Feelings of unquestionable readiness, in effect, blind oneself to one’s own shortcomings. Second, whiteness produces feelings of anger and shame when one fails to perform antiracism. These emotions undermine the whitely white’s ability to learn from failures and, again, to truly prepare for anti-racist work. Thus, the self-righteous and shame-faced whitely white will tend to redouble his or her whiteness by believing that his or her way of doing things is “*the right way*” and “*the only way*” (Condon 34). As a self-destructive structure of feeling, whiteness disables whites from listening to and working with others and, thus, maturing as individuals concerned with racial justice. Condon seeks to intervene in the cycle of whiteness by encouraging whites to “open [them]selves to ways of knowing ... that exceed and transgress the certainties to which [they] may cling” (8), to develop a “[c]ommodious language [that] creates worlds replete with space and time *for* difference” (9), to prepare themselves to “give voice to [their] lostness” (19), to “be ready for surprise” (72), and “to become conscious of [their] own limitations” (76).^[6] Toward those quasi-poetic ends, Condon provides a repertoire of Freud- and Heidegger-inspired rhetorical tactics, including: “ideation,” the practice of connecting “our experience and thought to collective memory and to history” (55; see also 36, 38, 47); “decentering,” the practice of “bringing to light ... those learned and now habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and sensing ourselves in relation to others, that shape our everyday lives” (65); and, finally, “nuancing,” an expansive practice of cultivating “a critical awareness of the complex and dynamic relationship between the self and the social, the self and the historical production of raced subjects” (112). On one hand, these rhetorical tactics promise to undermine the form of embodied censorship represented by whiteness, if only because these tactics are the polar opposite of whiteness, the same way that water would put out a fire. On the other hand, these rhetorical tactics lose

practical viability insofar as they do not take into account the local (conditions of) production of whiteness and the practical constraints and possibilities operating within the social spaces where this form of embodied censorship is produced.

Condon, however, is not concerned with the practical, institutional production of whiteness—nor of any form of embodied censorship – in concrete social spaces such as the university writing classroom or the writers' workshop. The stories that she uses to flesh out both her theory of embodied censorship and her rhetorical tactics are all far-removed from the mundane world of writing instruction and academic research—the lifeworld where students' and compositionists' beliefs, attitudes, and general dispositions are processually inculcated into their bodies through academic writing rituals, among other practices. The reader learns of Condon's troubled relationship with her Native-American brother, her brother's struggles with violent racists and institutional racism, her disturbing encounter with poor children outside of a restaurant, and her profound pilgrimage to Wounded Knee, among many other touching experiences. These stories are powerfully and beautifully written – a touchstone for philosophies of whiteness—but they evince no rigorous attempt on Condon's part to think through how her everyday life as an intellectual shapes her approach to, experience of, and re-memory of these remarkable moments, let alone how the university intellectual's practical consciousness might predispose her or him to obfuscate the social-material conditions that make possible her or his "critical" dispositions, perspectives, and prescriptions (i.e., Condon's preferred modes of conduct and rhetorical tactics).

Indeed, the striking absence of a practico-institutional self-reflexivity in Condon's seemingly highly self-reflexive storytelling is made present in Condon's proposed tactics. Only an intellectual unconcerned with the material conditions that produce the leisure time and apartness from the world that is required for the construction of academic theories and "critical" practices can contend, in good faith, that "ideation," "decentering," and "nuancing" are rhetorical tactics open to the general public and not dependent on academic resources, on academic ways of knowing, and, as Bourdieu states, on the academy's paradoxically "liberatory [yet] ... potentially crippling separation" from "the world of [industrial] production" and "social and economic necessity" (Bourdieu, *Pascalian* 15). Notwithstanding Condon's explicit emphasis on the body's affects, her highly intellectual rhetorical tactics necessitate historical research, auto-ethnographic inquiry methods, a non-instrumentalist attitude toward literacy, surplus time and energy, and, generally speaking, an academic disposition toward knowledge and experience. Most of these necessities are as much closed-off to the general public and new college students as they are taken for granted and quietly celebrated by university intellectuals. What is missing is a concern for the social-material conditions of the academy that paradoxically, on one hand, make possible Condon's novel philosophical approach to whiteness and, on the other hand, thwart conceptualizations of the social-material production of whiteness—conceptualizations which would need to transcend the latent academico-centrism of Condon's text, which, like most critical philosophies of whiteness, is more concerned with describing whiteness's *content* than its production, more concerned with describing tactics of anti-whiteness than with analyzing their social-material conditions of (im)possibility.

I do not mean to single out Condon's text. Many other scholars have offered critical philosophies of whiteness that evade the question of how forms of embodied censorship are produced and what social-material conditions make critical tactics viable and valuable. For example, Krista Ratcliffe's *Rhetorical Listening* argues that certain cultural logics entail white beliefs and whitely censorship, but her monograph neither explains how and in what conditions certain bodies appropriate these cultural logics nor how and in what conditions they might be rhetorically resisted, other than to suggest that all whites—regardless of social-material context—can and should learn to *listen* better. Ratcliffe is more concerned with creating a synchronic map of problematic cultural logics and attendant listening tactics than with tracking the diachronic production of both racist cultural logics and the social-material conditions in which they become persuasive and embodied. The same can be said of Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe's *Rhetoric Review* symposium on whiteness studies, which is overwhelmingly concerned with how bodies are always-already "troped" in life as in cultural texts (Kennedy et al. 359-60). More recently, Ryden and Marshall have combined the second wave's philosophical orientation with the first wave's rhetoric of bodies. In *Reading, Writing, and the Rhetorics of Whiteness*, Ryden and Marshall use cultural theories of confession, kitsch, and emotion in order to identify and describe whiteness's new forms and contents. Like Condon, Ratcliffe, and Kennedy et al., Ryden and Marshall's new monograph does not analyze (conditions of) the production of embodied censorship, white beliefs, or whiteness, nor the social-material conditions of possibility of their own critical philosophies. In all of these cases, the question of (conditions of) production is off the table. What does cover the table are analyses of arrested moments of whiteness's *repetition*.^[7]

The primary difference between analyses of repetition and analyses of (the conditions of) production is that the latter try to explain how white beliefs become embedded in bodies without relying on the tautology that white bodies are inherently predisposed (by discourse or by blood) to reproduce white beliefs, and, secondly, without indulging in quasi-poetical obfuscations of social-material reality. Indeed, if one is explaining or describing the repetition of

whiteness, one can assume that (white) beliefs are “always-already” embedded in (white) bodies, ready to be repeated “with a difference,” as post-structuralists like to say. The moment of repetition-with-a-difference can then be cut out, pinned down, and analyzed for residual and emergent traces of an *a priori* whiteness.^[8] And, if one does not believe that language can be more or less true to reality, then one can use whatever language one wants to describe these repetitions. The danger lies in offering poetical descriptions of whiteness's trace and surplus content without considering the trace's actual production and, as should be clear, without attributing this production to something other than an *a priori* white body, white belief, or whiteness. Alternately, if the analyst takes the methodological risk of tentatively bracketing the notion that racist cultural logics and whitely dispositions are always-already embedded in predisposed whitely bodies, then the analysis will need to work through the challenge of explaining how *that* predisposition and how *those* beliefs were produced—how they got there in the first place – without, in another evasion, simply attributing them to structural racism. The fact that the U.S. is structurally racist does not alone account for nor truly explain the production of predispositions and the embedding of white beliefs in certain bodies, in specific fields of social-historical activity. If one goal of anti-racist pedagogy is to undermine the seemingly endless repetition of whitely predispositions and white beliefs, and not just to describe and critique “post-production” repetitions of whiteness, then it would be fitting to supplement the rhetoric of bodies and critical philosophies of whiteness with a critical social theory of the (conditions of) production of these predispositions and their processes of embodiment. Luckily, this work has already begun.

Embodied Censorship: Toward A Materialist Social Theory

Although the rhetoric of bodies and critical philosophies of whiteness have challenged, respectively, the liberal humanist notion of “symmetrical reciprocity” and the centrality of rationality at the expense of emotion, these strands of scholarship have not investigated the dialectical production of embodied censorship and white beliefs in determinate fields of practice, specifically the field of education, with its academic writing rituals. One composition study to depart from the rhetoric of bodies and philosophies of whiteness is Jennifer Seibel Trainor's 2008 monograph *Rethinking Racism*. In this section I appropriate three of Pierre Bourdieu's key concepts in order to review and extend Trainor's attention to the question and conditions of production. Against critical whiteness studies that explicitly appropriate and tacitly misuse Bourdieusian concepts (e.g., Bonilla-Silva; Bonilla-Silva, Goar, & Embrick), Trainor's work, which does not cite Bourdieu, is, oddly enough, indicative of his concepts' capacity to help compositionists understand the local production of both embodied censorship and white beliefs. My synthesis of Bourdieu and Trainor will yield an outline of a materialist social theory of embodied censorship. It is intended to be one of many theoretical tools for designing composition pedagogies that rework academic writing rituals as a means of enabling students to consider counter-hegemonic beliefs.

Central to Bourdieu's critical social theory are three linked concepts: “*capital*, accumulable social-symbolic resources [that enable and constrain agents' pursuit of personal respect and social dignity;] *field*, the arenas of social life and struggle [that have semi-autonomous histories, logics, and hierarchized agents;] and *habitus*, ‘embodied social structures’ [and embodied ‘game plans’] that serve as [tacit] principles organizing practice” (Collins 116). The micro field in which Trainor studied racist discourse was a suburban, mid-Eastern high school, almost entirely white. Constructing a nuanced representation of this slice of the larger educational field proved to be indispensable to her effort to grasp the local production of embodied censorship and white beliefs, as I will explain after describing the field. In this field, several classes of agents colluded and competed for power and dignity in and through the school. While the principle and upper-level administrators sought to increase the school's and its students' cultural capital (i.e., prestige) by both offering advanced courses to everyone and requiring everyone to complete extensive senior projects with a social justice and multicultural component, many middle-class parents used their social capital (i.e., connections and influence) to undermine any curricula that they perceived to be gratuitous impediments to their children's graduation and matriculation to a local community college, modest state college, or professional school—paths that would save the parents economic capital as well as keep their children close. While some middle and upper-middle class students seconded their parents' desire for them to lead “normal” lives by rejecting critical multicultural pedagogies and the senior project as wastes of time, these students, as well as some working-class students, critiqued racism and voiced liberal multicultural discourse in order to obtain cultural capital and distinguish themselves from working-class students marked as “trash” or “hicks,” some of whom capitalized on official opportunities to accumulate cultural capital and gain admission to a prestigious university. Although these groups struggled against each other as they sought to influence the meaning, means, and social function of education, their struggles shared and produced a common logic that structured the entire field and profoundly affected students' disposition toward academic writing rituals. This common logic was a local form of economic instrumentalism. Upper-level administrators goaded students to apply to universities so that they could obtain the best jobs and increase the high school's prestige; many parents wanted students to graduate with greater ease so that they could move quickly into the workforce; and many students questioned and resisted any activity that was not directly related to obtaining employment. Even critical pedagogues participated in economic instrumental rationality by legitimizing

critical analysis of multicultural texts with the assertion that similar tasks would be required in the “real world” of work.

The field’s centripetal economic instrumentalism and centrifugal social conflicts interanimated the school’s “emotioned rules,” that is, the “implicit norms of behavior, attitude, intellectual habits, values, and practices that were taught and enforced via emotional exhortation” (Trainor 23). Upper-level administrators, coaches, counselors, and teachers often exhorted students to contribute to the school’s social cohesion *not* by valuing differences and working through conflicts, but rather by stressing commonalities and evading any sort of conflict. When students voiced concerns about personal or social conflicts, they were instructed to keep a positive attitude, to quietly shoulder the weight of their concerns, and to stop feeling like they deserve special attention. In terms of concrete social practices and bodily rituals, teachers and students managed “what might appear as chaotic or conflicting social relations through simplifying practices like moving between classes only when bells ring, assigning letter grades to students, counting words in journal entries, et cetera” (Trainor 101). Morning announcements and everyday objects like a smiley-face bean-bag chair were used and read as arguments that if everyone maintained a positive attitude without demanding special attention, and if everyone executed their tasks without demonstrating weakness, then everyone would become more empowered to overcome challenges and to move on to their lives’ next stage. These were the beliefs and values “made body” by the school’s “implicit pedagogy,” expressed and reproduced through everyday practices and rituals. It is important to note that these values and beliefs were made body in distinct pairings. For example, students came to embody and believe the idea that *social equality* could only be achieved by *stressing commonality and erasing differences*. Likewise, students came to embody a belief that the only way to *prevent chaos* and social disintegration was for everyone to be *obedient to alienated and alienating rules and rituals*, such as obeying the bell, prioritizing formal requirements when writing, and reciting the pledge of allegiance. A network of problematic values—in direct opposition to the values of critical pedagogy and many counter-hegemonic texts—were inculcated into many (of course, not all) students through their everyday practices and rituals.

Academic genres and literacy practices functioned as loci for the practice of emotioned rules, the embodiment of problematic values, and—as will soon be clear—the production of white beliefs and embodied censorship. As teachers and students worked on the senior project’s research-paper component, they “made body” the values of both economic instrumentalism and obedience to alienated and alienating rules. From on high, the school district provided strict guidelines for the project, including specific instructions on how to understand and write a thesis statement—instructions that were meant to head off parents’ attempts to “use irregularities in the standards or curriculum as evidence in their complaints about a course their child is struggling with or a teacher who is failing their child” (Trainor 84). Administrators “calmed such parents by telling them that the curriculum has been carefully designed by committees of experts and was applied fairly and uniformly in all required courses” (Trainor 84). Indeed, the grading criteria, like the definition of a thesis statement, came to the students in commodified form. While these “carefully designed” handouts and worksheets enabled administrators to defend the senior project (including its social justice component) against parents who critiqued it as overly intellectual and gate-keeping, these same documents undermined the teacher’s practical efforts to enable students to approach the research paper as an intellectual endeavor and opportunity for personal growth. Like the bell between classes, the school district’s thesis statement definition and grading criteria seemed to come from nowhere and demand unthinking obedience, which it received in practice. Students approached the research paper and other academic literacy activities as so many checkpoints on the road to something other and better. While students practiced academic literacy, they were practicing the school’s emotioned rules and embodying its problematic network of values.

This was true for “critical” as well as more “traditional” assignments. One representative student instrumentalized the teacher’s imperative to explore complexity and avoid easy judgments as she, the student, “managed to avoid engaging with the larger ideas that [the critical teacher] was trying to teach” (Trainor 109). Although the teacher challenged the dominant rules and values by encouraging students to be passionate as they read and wrote about social justice, she also perpetuated the dominant rules and values when students’ “passions” manifested themselves in racist or otherwise noxious discourses and beliefs. When students passionately endorsed revenge-style forms of “justice” or angrily ridiculed fictional characters, the teacher encouraged them to approach the texts more positively and with a cool, analytical demeanor—a demeanor that would get them places in the real world (Trainor 116). Once again, the students learned that positive thinking and emotional detachment were necessary if they were going to accomplish goals. Similarly, when students critiqued the senior project and other academic practices as pointless or useless, the teacher echoed administrators’ imperatives to cheer up, get it done, and move on. There was no point in “complaining” or trying to change things – you could change things once you finished the critical essay or the senior project. “Critical” as well as “traditional” literacy pedagogy reproduced the field’s prevailing “implicit pedagogy” and habitus, calling into question the very possibility of a truly *critical* pedagogy.

The values and beliefs inculcated into the student habitus simultaneously “made body” a form of censorship that would be actualized and made manifest as it conditioned students’ interpretations of what can loosely be called

counter-hegemonic texts, such as Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and John Edgar Wideman's "Our Time." When Black characters demonstrated perseverance in the face of racism, the students praised these characters for not complaining and for keeping a positive attitude. When characters critiqued racial injustice or white beliefs, the students dismissed the characters as whiners and/or tried to create common ground by claiming that their, the students,' ancestors were not slave-owning racists. Some students also tried to "help" these characters by encouraging them to find strength by looking on the bright side, by realizing that not all whites are racist. Acting as "analogical operator[s]" (Bourdieu, *Logic* 71) whose "practice [is] founded on the transfer of [interpretive] schemes" from one activity to another (Bourdieu, *Pascalian* 57), the students imposed the school's instrumental rationality, emotion rules, and problematic values onto not only the fictional characters' conflicts and goals but also the multicultural curriculum that required them to engage these texts in the first place (Trainor 90). How could Angelou advance racial harmony while "complaining," and how would reading Angelou help them, the students, obtain a diploma and a job, the school's *raison d'être*? For some critical pedagogues, these questions evince the corrupting effects of white discourse and whitely subjectivity, but for the student habitus, these questions were legitimate and logical, deeply resonant with the field's practical social dynamics.

At the end of the day, few students' grasp of the counter-hegemonic texts and curriculum went undistorted by the form of embodied censorship inculcated into their habitus through their participation in the field's everyday values, rituals, and rules. These students' (mis)understandings were no doubt racist in that they perpetuated beliefs that naturalize and legitimate racial injustice. But rather than interpret these utterances as repetitions of whiteness or as a rational defense of their racial privilege or as the students' lack of interpersonal communication skills, Trainor stresses that these white beliefs were produced by something *more* and *other* than an *a priori* whiteness or racism. White beliefs were produced in real time as students' embodied censorship clashed with and cohered in opposition to counter-hegemonic texts whose content and structure of feeling challenged the school's instrumental rationality, emotion rules, and "second nature" values.

The preceding synthesis of Trainor and Bourdieu should illuminate how white beliefs are often the product not of rational actors seeking to shrewdly defend their privilege but rather of well-meaning agents' (mis)readings of texts that challenge the values "made body" through their participation in the everyday practices of an agonistic field. That is not to discount the role of larger cultural narratives, longer-standing patterns of racial oppression or class exploitation, and the group interests that these narratives and patterns express. Instead, Trainor's study reminds us, in Bourdieu's words, "that ideologies are always *doubly determined*, that they owe their most specific characteristics not only to the interests of the classes or class fractions they express ... , but also to the *specific interests* of those who *produce* them and to *the specific logic of the field of production*" (*Language* 169, emphasis added). In other words, the white beliefs produced in the school were indeed expressions of macro white racial and capitalist "interests" (i.e., the beliefs *did* naturalize white privilege and capitalism), but they were also utterances produced and mobilized by *specific* agents in pursuit of *specific* forms of capital in a *specific* field, which heavily mediated those larger narratives and social forces. If we look closer at the second half of whiteness's "double determination"—the field-dependent determination—we can see how the local production of embodied censorship and white beliefs in Trainor's school is also "doubly determined." To borrow Trainor's phrase, the production of embodied censorship and white beliefs is a "psychosocial rhetorical phenomena" (4), but, as Bourdieu would add, it is also a social-material process. While there is no doubt that it is "through [local] language that injustice is created and sustained" (Trainor 140), it should be equally clear that local language or "discourse" never operates outside of field-dependent social-material processes and practices as it reproduces (or challenges) the beliefs that legitimize and naturalize racial injustice. As Bourdieu writes:

symbolic power [or discourse] does not reside in 'symbolic systems' [or discursive formations] in the form of an 'illocutionary force' but [rather] is defined in and through ... the very structure of the field in which *belief* is produced and reproduced. What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief. (*Language* 170)

It is not words alone but rather their co-constitution with(in) a field's rituals, values, and social structure that inculcates into the habitus a form of censorship that can produce white beliefs and undermine teachers' and students' capacity to grasp and deliberate over counter-hegemonic beliefs. Accordingly, it is the embodiment of different values and different motivations, ones made possible by the field's immanent rituals—rather than either externally imposed curricular changes or "anything goes" pedagogies that ignore the field's rituals—that might enable transformations in students' embodied censorship and belief-value system.

I believe that the challenge presented by Trainor's and Bourdieu's social materialist theory of the production of embodied censorship and white beliefs is twofold, one part research agenda and one part pedagogical reflection. First, it recommends that compositionists ask themselves: *what* values are made body through their field's practices

and rituals, *how* are these values challenged or reproduced as they clash with and cohere around academic literacy practices and counter-hegemonic texts, and, finally, *what* beliefs are made persuasive and (re)produced by the field's practical activity? Second, it recommends that compositionists ask themselves how they might learn to work *against* by working *with* the student habitus (plural or singular) that animate their classrooms. In what follows, I consider how the preceding social materialist theory can inform composition pedagogies at work in social spaces that resemble Trainor's micro field. Because I have not yet undertaken an ethnographic study that would enable me to confidently answer the first set of questions, I will only speculate on my own efforts to understand and work with/against the forms of embodied censorship that I have encountered.

Of students that I encounter in my first-year writing class, many approach academic writing rituals with a set of embodied values very similar to Trainor's subjects. They embody not only a commitment to order, fairness, community, and positive thinking, not to mention politeness, but also a parallel belief that these values are best achieved through, respectively, alienated rules, commodified standards, suppression of conflict, and avoidance of critique. I have found that simply presenting students with counter-hegemonic texts, such as 1967's *Black Power* and more recent post-Black Power hip-hop (e.g., Immortal Technique, Talib Kweli, and Dead Prez), does not best enable them to reflect on and change their embodied values, beliefs, and habitus—let alone grasp and deliberate over these texts' past and present significance. And neither does encouraging them to practice rhetorical tactics like "nuancing" or "ideation," à la Condon, or even asking them to consider the assumptions lurking beneath their values and beliefs, à la many critical pedagogues. What I have found to be productive is a process—of course, my process is neither "new"/"mine" nor intended to be prescriptive—in which we begin by discussing common-sense understandings of academic writing conventions and rituals (i.e., the multiple means and ends of summarizing, citing, analyzing, etc.), then we consider the contradictions made evident by our own and other writers' attempts to put into practice these common-sense understandings, and, finally, we deliberate over and put into practice new critical conceptions of academic writing conventions and rituals. We do this repeatedly. (I provide a concrete example below.) These tasks constitute a fairly disciplined "countertraining" which is very similar to Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner's process of reworking conventions and negotiating "error." The primary difference is that I, as a teacher, try to be especially conscious of the values embodied in students' predispositions toward conventions, and, without marking those values as "wrong" or symptoms of false consciousness, try to encourage students to reflect on the critical, alternative values embodied in our "reworked" conventions and rituals. Beneath the surface of our rational reflection on academic writing rituals, I hope that the actual *doing* of our countertraining is simultaneously opening students' bodies up to new, alternative values—values which might enable students to overcome whatever form of embodied censorship they are working within, if only slightly, and to better consider counter-hegemonic beliefs.

For example, if students approach citation practices/methods as alienated rules and standards that, like some patents and copyrights, ensure a "just desserts" style of fairness (recall the rules-fairness values pair), I might have them listen to some hip-hop music in order to consider other reasons why one might want to "give credit where credit's due." Although rappers might "cite" other rappers in order to one-up or demean them, they also use citation practices as a means of showing respect, establishing a lineage, and extending an idea. We would consider how the key value pair "made body" by hip-hop citation practices is not fairness via obedience to alienated rules/standards but rather respect and creativity via situated acknowledgement of predecessors/past ideas. Then, we could use the new value-pairing as a foil for highlighting the contradiction within our previous, common-sense understanding of academic citation methods, hopefully realizing that alienated rules can never be "fair" insofar as they are not shaped by the people they affect and, secondly, that no one can get "just desserts" ("fairness") so long as "just desserts" are so narrowly and statically defined. After all, what's more just or fair? Simply getting credit (i.e., "paid") for an idea, or seeing "your" idea shape future artists and ideas? Most students agree that the latter is more just and fair.

But all of this is only so much exoticization of hip-hop culture and impotent consciousness raising until we, first, deliberate over how the values made body by hip-hop's citation practices can and should be made body in academic citation practices and, secondly—and this is crucial—actually put them into practice, actually *do* them, again and again, through "repeated exercises." My hope is that, over time, students will make body another, alternative set of values—values that open up their habitus' embodied censorship – so that they might better grasp and deliberate over the counter-hegemonic beliefs expressed in texts like *Black Power* and post-Black Power hip hop. My wager is that if students' embodied reworking of academic writing rituals can enable them to consider how fairness and alienated rules, or community and suppression of conflict, are *not* inherently co-dependent but rather potentially antagonistic, then they will be in a better position to grasp, say, Stokely Carmichael's argument that racial equality ("community") cannot be achieved without a struggle for Black political power ("conflict") or Dead Prez's argument, in the song "'They' Schools," that education is *just* ("fair") insofar as it dialogically speaks to the needs and ambitions of the local community (as opposed to the alienated and alienating "standards" of distant bureaucrats or social scientists). In short, by approaching traditional academic writing rituals as a means of engaging and reworking students' *embodied* values, and by practically embodying alternative values that actually resonate with counter-

hegemonic texts' values (thus rendering these texts less susceptible to embodied censorship), compositionists might better enable students to consider counter-hegemonic beliefs and, as a result, their own beliefs.

Conclusion: The Limits of Pure Symbolic Action

We know the futility of all actions which seek to use only the weapons of logical or empirical refutation in combating this or that form of racism Habitus is not destiny; but symbolic action cannot, on its own, without transformation of the conditions of the production of and transformation of dispositions, extirpate bodily beliefs.

—Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (180)

Compositionists teach writing, study writing, and write about writing. Some work in departments of Writing Studies. It is perhaps no wonder that Composition has found post-structuralist textualism to be persuasive and insightful, as suggested by the discipline's bibliographies, theoretical metaphors (e.g., "sonic texts"), and textbook titles, like *Everything's a Text* and *The World is a Text*. I myself have always been uncomfortable with granting a degree of agency to the "non-textual" or a degree of legitimacy to social theories that do not emphasize "textual power." Nevertheless, Composition's focus on writing and "symbolic action" can undermine its research and pedagogies inasmuch as the discipline does not attend to how the non-symbolic shapes how texts are read and produced, that is, how the non-discursive inscribes itself within the discursive. There are no symbolic actions; "[t]here are no signifying practices," independent of "social practices in general" (Giddens 39). Materialist social theories like Bourdieu's provide a fruitful and, I believe, necessary counter-balance to Composition's textualism. As we focus on the discursive production, distribution, and consumption of texts, we should pay equal attention to how the composition classroom, with its social practices and academic writing rituals, constitute one of "the conditions of the production of" not just texts but also "*dispositions*," including the disposition I am calling embodied censorship.

Bourdieu helps us understand how "[o]ne cannot really live the belief associated with profoundly different conditions of existence, ... still less give others the means of reliving it[,] by the sheer power of discourse" or symbolic action (*Logic* 68). While students do not need to "relive" others' beliefs in order to obtain a critical purchase on their own embodied beliefs, students do need to at least *understand* others' beliefs in order to reflect on their own. Of course, there are many different ways to understand an unfamiliar set of beliefs, but wholly imposing one's own worldview or feelings onto others' beliefs is *not* one of those ways – just as one cannot understand Bourdieu by imposing Foucault's ideas onto him. While the classroom cannot recreate other beliefs' "conditions of existence," the classroom can be a space where unfamiliar beliefs' *values* are "relived" through familiar yet reworked practices, namely academic writing rituals. Given the chance to work in the circle of an alternative value system, students, I believe, will be more enabled to understand unfamiliar beliefs and, thus, to critically reflect on their own. But as Bourdieu reminds us, one cannot enter "this magic circle by an instantaneous decision of will, but [rather] by ... a slow process of co-optation and initiation which is equivalent to a second birth" (*Logic* 68). It is this "second birth" into alternative value systems, rather than metaphorical suicide or bodily disintegration, that compositionists can and should midwife, even if only for one semester.

Notes

1. The relevant readings for my summary are the following Foucault texts: "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx" (on the radical contingency of interpretation), "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (on knowledge and history as the play of dominations), "Two Lectures" (on subjugated knowledges and their resistance potential), and "Technologies of the Self" (on individual agency). ([Return to text.](#))
2. My critique of the rhetoric of bodies is indebted to chapter four of Bourdieu's *The Logic of Practice*, Ignatiev and Garvey's *Race Traitor*, Olson's *The Abolition of White Democracy*, and the introductory chapter of Timothy Brennan's *Wars of Position*, which provides a relevant critique of the rhetoric of bodies (what Brennan calls "cultures of being") in Cultural-Studies scholarship. ([Return to text.](#))
3. Ryden cites James Baldwin, specifically his essay "If Black English Isn't a Language," as being sympathetic to her claim that white teachers probably have nothing to teach non-white students. This is a questionable use of Baldwin. In the Black English essay, Baldwin argues that "the bulk of the white people in America never had any interest in educating black people" and that no teacher can teach students whose experience he or she (the teacher) despises (783). Baldwin is making an historical observation and a pedagogical argument, neither of which are about whites' inherent capacity to teach non-whites vis-a-vis their subject position. Baldwin held a more existential conception of whiteness: for him, whiteness was not about a certain body type or subjectivity, but rather about one's chosen beliefs. If one cared about Black children's

experiences/languages and consistently acted in good faith on those beliefs, then one was not “white.” Recall how Baldwin, in his 1984 essay “On Being ‘White’... And Other Lies,” not only claims that “there is no white community” but also posits being white as “a moral choice” (90, 92). Even though people come to semi-unconsciously embody white beliefs as they “sit, stunned, before their TV sets, swallowing garbage that they know to be garbage,” people nonetheless become white by “deciding that they are white. ... By persuading themselves that a Black child’s life meant nothing compared to a white child’s life” (Baldwin, “On Being” 91). Marshall and Ryden definitely do not pose whiteness as a decision or moral choice. ([Return to text.](#))

4. Although nineteenth-century white females were subject to antimiscegenation and coverture laws, they could travel abroad, become citizens, and obtain a hearing in courts (Kerber xx). As political scientist Joel Olson succinctly puts the matter, “[w]hite women stood outside the public sphere, but slaves and free Black persons stood outside civil society altogether” (55). ([Return to text.](#))
5. More recent critical whiteness studies on “intersectionality” follow a similar structure. Jason Zingsheim and Dustin Bradley Goltz argue that insofar as the body is “ideologically positioned and inscribed” by discourses of race, “class, gender, sexuality, ability, nation, and so forth,” the body is also the site of a reciprocal “epistemic” complexity (221). In other words, as discourses ideologically position the body, the body’s epistemology comes to reflect its discursive positionality. The body will “think” its identity. My critique of this line of thought is not meant to deny correlations between, say, heterosexual bodies and heteronormative beliefs; instead, it is to question the causal relationship implied between one’s reified body and the production of one’s beliefs. Here, as in Ryden and Marshall, synchronic complexity (intersectionality) parallels diachronic simplicity (no discussion of temporal practices). The authors analyze the intersectional ideas and thoughts of static (albeit intersectional) bodies while bracketing analyses of the dialectical *production* of bodies and beliefs, in determinate fields of social practice. ([Return to text.](#))
6. The academico-centrism and quasi-poeticism of Condon’s work is discernible in the impossibility of some of her imperatives. How can one “be ready for surprise” (Condon 72)? If one is ready for a surprise, the surprise is no longer a surprise. Surprise implies a state of non-readiness. Also, one’s most important “limitations” are those that one cannot know—that is precisely why they are *limitations* (Condon 76). I know that I cannot compete in a professional sports league—I am conscious of that superficial limitation—but I alone did not make this limitation conscious to myself. Others made it conscious to me. It is impossible for oneself to become conscious of one’s own limitations. *Others* need to instruct us of our limitations. It is only after others tell us of our failures or teach us something that we can, retrospectively, learn of our limits and realize that we did not know something. That is why “historical amnesia” is a misleading metaphor for white Americans’ general lack of racial-historical knowledge. You cannot “forget” what you never learned; you cannot erase from memory what was never there in the first place. Condon’s impossible imperatives might be aesthetically/poetically interesting, but they require us to enter a land of make-believe, a land where academics can “play seriously” (Bourdieu, *Pascalian* 14) but is at odds with everyday existence. ([Return to text.](#))
7. For example, when Marshall discusses the whiteness of James Berlin’s critical pedagogy, he approvingly quotes Keith Gilyard, who rhetorically asked, “From the subject position of a white teacher, a label he did not reject, how could he teach students to ‘resist’ and ‘negotiate’ the controlling discourse that Whiteness is?” (qtd. in Ryden & Marshall 53). As they tautologically argue that Berlin repeated whiteness because he was a white body in a white society dominated by white beliefs, Marshall and Gilyard uncritically short-circuit the multiple practical mediations that lie between “white” bodies and the society’s “controlling discourse” of Whiteness. Marshall reiterates—and here is the epitome of such short-circuiting—that “Berlin is unable to resist the controlling discourse of whiteness precisely because of its imbrications in U.S. culture, *and subsequently in Berlin himself*” (Ryden and Marshall 53, emphasis added). These statements can be true, but only insofar as they are read as identifying and recapitulating an obvious *outcome*, a product, *not* a production process. Another expression of the rhetoric of bodies in an analysis of the repetition of whiteness occurs when Marshall gets “intersectional.” He argues that working-class white females can “express progressive beliefs” which middle-class whites cannot or are much less likely to do (Ryden and Marshall 144). As in their 2000 dialogue, Marshall’s analysis begins with certain types of bodies and ends with a description of the beliefs that they can or cannot express. Here, he explicitly states that the class-gender difference is precisely what accounts for the production of different beliefs, posing his analysis as one of production when in fact it offers yet another tautological, body-based analysis of a reified reiteration (“with a difference”) of whiteness (144). Ryden, in a chapter on emotions, plays the same sort of game, identifying bodies with particular beliefs and then implicitly or explicitly asserting a causal relationship between the type of body and the type of belief. Consider the following passage:

White people, resistant to and untrained in materialist, class-based understandings of their society, see themselves as the rightful beneficiaries of an American system of meritocracy. In

other words, as white people, they fully expect to achieve social-economic stability when they follow the “rules” of earnest industriousness; the unwritten, unspoken, unacknowledged—the “invisible”—expectation is that they should succeed in a way that those who are not white should not. (Ryden & Marshall 125)

Ryden begins with a particular body type (“white people”) and then explains their beliefs as they currently exist (“post-production”), in effect establishing an analytical base to build upon. She can then identify moments when these beliefs are repeated, with a difference, by whites in different situations. ([Return to text.](#))

8. It is helpful to conceptualize production as an additive equation ($[w1] + a + b + c = w2$) and repetition as a series ($w1, w2, w3, w4 \dots$). One can endlessly analyze isolated cases of whiteness without theorizing how any of those particular cases were produced. Of course, we need both types of analysis. We cannot investigate the production of a form of whiteness without first (however tentatively) identifying that form ($[w1]$) and, secondly, locating it in the production process. We undercut our overall understanding of whiteness if we never move back and forth between analyses of repetition and analyses of production. My concern is that the social-material conditions of the academy promote the former and militate against latter, rendering whiteness as an eternal series of differential repetitions. Jennifer Trainor, as I argue, is a productivist because she explains how non-whitely or non-racist elements ($a + b + c$) interact to produce white beliefs. This is why she is always writing, non-tautologically, that racist discourse is not grounded in racism “per se.” ([Return to text.](#))

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