Defining and Experiencing Authorship(s) in the Composition Classroom: Findings from a Qualitative Study of Undergraduate Writing Students at the City University of New York

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ABSTRACT: Theories of authorship and models of the author have been influential in shaping various approaches to composition theory and pedagogy. While discussions of the role of the author and authorship in composition studies have been going on for some time, tensions between the theoretical (author as social construct) and practical (author as agent) dimensions of authorship remain unresolved. Presenting the findings of a qualitative study of undergraduate writers at The City University of New York, this article explores student perspectives on models of authorship, the relationships between these models and student experiences of authorship in different writing situations, and proposes the importance of distinguishing between the multiple models and definitions of authorship and the rhetorical contexts associated with each.

KEYWORDS: authorship, authorships, Romantic author, authorial construction, audience construction, students, writers, authors

Authorship in Composition Studies and Basic Writing: A Brief Overview

There are few terms or concepts as central to literary and composition studies as the author. However, to ask the question of what an author is raises a number of questions: Is an author the same thing as a writer? Is everyone

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an author? Is anyone an author? The apparent simplicity of these questions masks a deeper complexity, which results from a profound tension between theoretical and practical concerns related to authorship. At the center of theoretical discussions about authorship lies the question of whether an author is best described as an individual solely responsible for the creation of a unique body of work, or as a cultural function that emerges out of the circulation and interpretation of work attributed to one individual. While the Author as originary genius may, almost forty years after Roland Barthes pronounced the death of the author, have some defenders in certain fields, within composition studies, the poststructural model, which proposes that the author is best defined as a convenient fiction, or character, produced by various discourses, has received wide acceptance by leading critics in the field. Yet when it comes to the practical reality of actual student subjects and writing classrooms, compositionists would largely agree that enabling students to achieve a sense of authorship is a primary goal of courses in writing. But what is authorship if the author herself is conceived as a product, as opposed to a producer, of various discourses?

Theories of authorship and models of the author have played an important role in thinking about writing processes and writing subjects in each of the three major periods of composition theory and pedagogy—current-traditional, expressivist/cognitivist, and social. While the specific ways in which models of the author have been used in each are not entirely uniform, a somewhat rough overview might depict the Romantic author as a gatekeeper for current-traditionalists, as a model of the writing subject for expressivists and cognitivists, and as a socio-historical construct for social theorists who, motivated by theoretical, rhetorical, and practical concerns, have explored and proposed alternate models and conceptions of the writing subject (LeFevre, Miller, Bizzell, Bartholomae). By the 1990s, composition scholars were moving away from a focus on models of the writing subject as either centered and solitary (Romantic), or decentered and socially constructed (poststructural), and towards a consideration of the implications of various models of authorship for writing students and for composition as a discipline. Stuart Greene looked at the ways in which students engage in acts of authorship in his 1995 article, "Making Sense of My Own Ideas: The Problems of Authorship in the Beginning Writing Classroom," while Kay Halasek considered the relationships between student identity and models of authorship in her 1999 *A Pedagogy of Possibility*, drawing attention to the way in which any approach to composition pedagogy that seeks to empower students by assuming the identity of writer for them "marginalizes and

renders subordinate students' other subjectivities and self-representations" (46). Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals* (1991) analyzed the importance of models of authorship in defining and maintaining the high status of literary studies versus the low status of composition; while Bruce Horner looked at the factors that contribute to the enactment and continuation of an Author/student binary both within and outside the composition classroom in his 1997 article, "Students, Authorship, and the Work of Composition"; and Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford investigated models of collective and collaborative authorship in their *Singular Texts/Plural Authors* (1990).

Growing out of this work and Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi's research on the socio-historical and economic construction of the Romantic author, the most recent scholarship in authorship studies in composition has been focused on the power dynamics and implications of what many have identified as an evident Author/student binary, a function which renders and defines students as error-makers in order to maintain and protect the status and prominence of literary studies and canonical texts. Whether it is analyzing this binary and the construction of authorship in the writing classroom (Robillard, Murnen), creating opportunities for students to participate in and publish work related to the discourse and research methods of composition studies (Grobman, Spigelman, Wardle and Downs), exploring a model of the author as producer based on the work of Raymond Williams and Walter Benjamin (Trimbur), or how, as a result of this binary, students have become equated with plagiarists (Howard), work focused on authorship and its function within the composition classroom and in composition as a discipline has continued into the 21st century.

Interestingly, there is tremendous overlap in the issues involved in discussions of the Author/student binary and those that have occupied scholars involved in the study of basic writing for some time. For instance, we find the clear divide separating literary scholars' interpretive methods and reading strategies for approaching complex literary texts versus their reactions to and reception of the written work of basic writers (Shaughnessey, Bartholomae), as well as basic writing's dialectical relationship to literary studies in which the power and prestige of the latter is consolidated via the author function and defined in opposition to the former (Stygall). While recent work on authorship in composition has not been focused on basic writers per se, it nevertheless addresses many of the concerns of this cohort as it promotes the rights of students to their own texts, explores student writing practices in relation to new technologies, and advocates an elevation in status for student writers in general.

After almost thirty years of work on authorship in composition, there now appears to exist a strong consensus among theorists regarding how they would like to see students position themselves in relationship to academic writing[1], namely with responsibility and engagement, and how student writing should be received by instructors, namely with respect and consideration. However, there remain questions related to how these two goals are to be reached in light of the complexity of the relationships between the theoretical and practical dimensions of authorship, as well as of how students actually define and experience authorship. For some, such as Miller and Rebecca Moore Howard, there is no need to fix any of the terms of the discussion. Rather, the terms in their theoretical and practical instantiations exist in relation to one another, each socially constructed and historically dependent, at any moment inflected by disciplinary, technological, cultural, and institutional factors. As Howard explains, a lack of consensus regarding the definition of authorship is evidence that "the heterogeneity of theories of authorship, the contradictory definitions that exist simultaneously, render impossible any sort of unitary representation" ("Plagiarisms" 793). However, for others, such as Kelly Ritter, contested notions of the author threaten to not only complicate students' understanding of authorship but to undermine students' sense of agency and ownership in relation to academic writing. In her 2005 "The Economics of Authorship: Online Paper Mills, Student Writers, and First-Year Composition," Ritter proposes "understanding how and when students see themselves as authors" (603) as one crucial element of preventing plagiarism and suggests that "instead of further sublimating the author ourselves, we should work to solidify our students' ideas of authorship, and their identities as writers" (625-26). Both approaches, each based on a distinct model and understanding of authorship, raise several questions: How do students define and understand authorship and models of the author in general and in relation to themselves? Do they rely more on received notions of authorship or new models presented in the writing classroom? What relationships exist between authority and authorship and how are they configured both in relation to textual production and reception?

In order to further explore student perspectives on authorship, I developed a qualitative study focused on analyzing how students conceive of themselves in different scenes of writing and whether these conceptions have any relationship to models of the author. While I did not necessarily expect the 2005 study to help refine and clarify some of the terms involved in discussions of authorship, nor to bridge certain theoretical and practical concerns, the findings have offered some insights related to both issues.

Focused on student definitions and experiences of authorship in academic writing as expressed and encapsulated in definitions of the terms *author* and *writer*, the study allowed me to begin to understand how students define themselves and the rhetorical context of academic writing when they are writing with authority and how these conceptions relate to various models of authorship.

Developing a Qualitative Study: Project Background, Methodology, and Participants

My research began with a question derived from my interest in David Bartholomae's work on the ways in which writing students negotiate with and construct authority in academic discourse communities and from my experience teaching composition courses at an urban, public university: Why is it that some students operate from a position of authority in academic writing and in the composition classroom and others do not? My initial working hypothesis, in other words, what it is that I set out to "prove" (it is difficult, though important, to admit that I did, initially, plan on proving something definitive about the use of the term *author* in the composition classroom), was that students who were comfortable referring to themselves as *authors* might have a different sense of authority in relation to writing than those who did not. If this were, in fact, the case, how and from where was this sense of authority derived? Did authority vary based on the way in which a student identified him or herself? Were students who considered themselves authors able to *see* their writing with a greater degree of clarity and objectivity and therefore better attend to the rhetorical structure of their writing than those students who did not consider themselves authors? My goal in undertaking a qualitative study was not "simply" to prove my hypothesis, but also to investigate whether it was possible to move or change the self-definitions of students who *did not* readily conceive of themselves as authors.

Having been an adjunct lecturer at The City College of New York's Center for Worker Education (CWE) during the initial planning stages of the qualitative study and for several years prior, I decided that I would interview students enrolled there.[2] An extension campus of The City College of New York, CWE was founded in collaboration with public employee unions and its programs were designed and created specifically for working adults seeking to complete their Bachelors degrees.[3] Classes are offered in the evenings and on Saturdays, and the registration and advising processes are tailored to fit the lives of working adults. CWE has approximately 800 students in

attendance, eighty percent of whom are female; the students' average age is 40, and a large number of students enroll with some transfer credit, either from two-year or four-year colleges. The student body is made up of a diverse, multicultural population and many CWE students are not only returning to school after a long absence, but are commonly the first members of their families to attend college.

Based on the model of a small, liberal arts college, CWE's curriculum was designed to be highly interdisciplinary. As a result, all CWE students must enroll in what are called "core courses," which are comprised of two semesters each of Core Humanities, Core Social Science, and Core Science. Although there is an English Composition course offered at CWE, it is not a required course. Instead, the college's formal introduction to college writing, or composition, is included in Core Humanities 100 and 101, a sequence of courses that are focused on the study of literature from a range of genres and historical periods. Though somewhat different in the types of literary works studied and in the scope of essay assignments, both courses include an introduction to academic writing.

Having considered the advantages and disadvantages of including students whom I had taught versus those I had not had in my classes, I decided to interview students who were not currently being taught by me, but who had been enrolled in my Humanities 101 course in the Fall 2003 or Spring 2004 semester. I made the decision to interview students whom I had taught for several reasons. First, I felt that because I had some relationship with these students and had worked with them as writing students, they would feel more comfortable discussing their thoughts about writing with me. Second, having collected formal essays from these students, I could then consider these in relation to their comments about writing. Third, the ability to talk about specific texts—Homer's *Odyssey*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*—that we had read, specific classroom experiences that we had shared, and specific essays that students had written, would enhance my understanding of a student's comments in the interview. Fourth, one goal of the project was to offer a rich profile of these students and their relationship to writing, both of which were facilitated by my having an established relationship with them. Finally, there was the logistical consideration that adult students are very busy juggling academic studies with full-time jobs and family responsibilities, so that having some relationship with students would facilitate the scheduling and completion of interviews.

Realizing, even before the study was initiated, that with the small

size of the study and the complexity of the terms being discussed, I should broaden the scope of the study, I developed an interview guide focused more on student definitions of terms, the derivations of these definitions, and their functions within and outside of the composition classroom, rather than on proving the predominance of one term over another. The interview guide, which was used in the hour-long interviews with students, was designed to generate dialogue and be highly interactive while at the same time collecting information that could be analyzed and compared. The first section of the guide collected significant background information about the student, including their age, ethnic identity/identities, educational and work histories, their parents' occupations and educational backgrounds, college writing courses completed, and the types of writing performed at work and at home. The body of the interview began with a focus on definitions. I asked students to define, in their own words, the terms *author* and *writer*, whether they were comfortable applying these terms to themselves, the reasons why these terms may or may not be appropriate designations, and finally to compare and contrast the meanings of these terms in general, as well as when applied to themselves. From a focus on definitions, I then posed more open-ended questions, asking students to reflect on their specific experiences with academic writing, and the ways in which reading literary texts may have influenced their writing processes, or the ways in which they conceived of themselves during their writing processes. The third section of the interview guide asked students to consider issues of audience awareness in academic and non-academic writing contexts; the fourth, and final, section posed a series of questions related to how having work published might alter a student's relationship and understanding of audience and, as a result, his or her sense of authority and definitions or conceptions of him or herself during the writing process. Questions related to the last issue included whether a student had had a piece of writing published in the past and, if so, whether this had changed his/her relationship to writing and if not, whether he/she would like to have a piece of writing published and how he/she might foresee this changing his or her conception of him or herself. This section also asked students to reflect on which piece of writing they might consider publishing and what their specific relationship to this piece of writing was.

The one-hour interviews took place over a one-month period in the winter of 2005 and participants received a twenty-dollar honorarium. In addition to the interviews, which were tape recorded and transcribed, informal writing samples, three formal essays, and essay drafts with student revision

notes and instructor marginal comments were collected and also included in the analysis and interpretation of the results of the study.

The group of students interviewed represented the overall CWE student body not only in terms of age and gender, but in terms of their overall conscientiousness, and on the basis of having been, for the most part, educated in New York City public schools. Furthermore, though those involved in the qualitative study were from a range of ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds, like all CUNY students, each shared a surprisingly consistent sensibility, which you could call "street-smart," though that is something of a misnomer since it is more accurately described as a kind of urban—and at times urbane—intelligence and humor. All were returning to college after some hiatus and, as is the case with many adult learners, all were very committed students.

Though representative of CUNY students in general and CWE students in particular, the participants[4] all, of course, had their own unique personalities and perspectives: Celia Fitzpatrick admitted to sometimes writing funny stories dedicated to her cat to overcome writer's block and had had a letter of complaint published many years prior in *Billboard* magazine. Christine Cummings aspired to write a memoir of her childhood even though she doubted she could do it well. Eliza Edwards was very focused on whether or not someone was being paid for his/her writing in her definitions of the terms author and writer and believed she had "mastered the rules" for academic essay writing. Lisa Monroe seemed somewhat surprised by her own academic success after her long absence from school and believed that, for many reasons, not just because she was a single parent, her life had been "interesting enough to write about." Daniel Stein had been an undergraduate at a SUNY college and a contributor to the college newspaper before dropping out to join the military, a move that was, considering the liberal leanings of his parents, a somewhat unusual choice. John Hernandez was in his early 20s, very proud to be a student at CWE, where his father had completed his B.A., and expressed an interest in publishing some of his essays to a wider audience. James Harrison had been born and raised in Harlem, was the first of his eight siblings to graduate from college, and had a strong belief in traditional approaches to writing education. Patricia Johnson was focused mainly on writing as a creative expression of who one is, though was, at the same time, highly attuned to the variations in stylistic demands of each and every professor. Susan Patterson had dropped out of a private liberal arts college before enrolling at CWE, once had her poems read by Toni Morrison as part of a writing program at her private high school, and

was very interested in doing further research on Haitian Creole. Jennifer Stevens, who had been born in the Dominican Republic and was the first member of her family to attend college, hoped not only to complete an M.A. and teach ESL after graduating from CWE, but commented on how much her own struggles with learning English had influenced her approach to written communication.

Despite the small size of the interview sample, there were numerous ways to categorize the students involved. There were three men (Hernandez, Harrison, Stein) and seven women (Cummings, Edwards, Fitzpatrick, Johnson, Monroe, Patterson, Stevens), ranging in age from 26 to 50. With the exception of Stevens, who was in her mid-30s, and Edwards, who was 50, the students were either in their mid-to-late 20s (Hernandez, Johnson, Patterson,) or mid-to-late 40s (Cummings, Fitzpatrick, Harrison, Monroe, Stein). Three were born outside of the U.S.: Cummings, who was born to Chinese parents in Guyana, Fitzpatrick, who was born in England to Jamaican parents, and Stevens, who was, like her parents, born in the Dominican Republic. All but three (Stein, Patterson, Edwards), who had been educated in the tri-state area, were graduates of New York City public schools. Two students identified themselves as African Americans (Johnson, Harrison), one as Dominican-American (Stevens), one as Jamaican (Fitzpatrick), one as Haitian-American (Patterson), two as Caucasian (Stein and Edwards), one as Puerto-Rican-American (Monroe), one as Latino (Hernadez), and one as Chinese-American (Cummings). There were three students employed as teacher's assistants (Monroe, Stevens, Johnson); two security guards (Stein and Hernandez); one program officer with a non-profit (Patterson); two city workers: one data processing supervisor with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Cummings), and one site supervisor for a neighborhood improvement squad (Harrison); one bookkeeper with an international fashion conglomerate (Fitzpatrick); and one legal assistant (Edwards).

In terms of their relationships to writing, all were engaged by and interested in it, though some were more self-deprecating than others (Fitzpatrick, Cummings), some more confident (Hernandez), some quite practical and grade conscious (Edwards, Stevens), some with more experience with writing and publishing (Stein, Patterson), one more interested in creative writing than academic writing (Johnson), and one basic writer (Harrison). Also noteworthy was the fact that a consistent differentiating factor among project participants and their relationships to writing related to whether a student had attended a community college prior to enrolling in a four year college. Those who had completed Associates Degrees tended to be more

critical of their writing abilities than those who had either dropped out of four-year colleges (Stein, Patterson), not attended any college prior to enrolling at CWE (Hernandez), or attended only some community college or adult education classes (Edwards, Monroe).

After completing ten interviews, I transcribed the contents of the audio-taped interviews and the hand-written transcripts of the telephone interviews. Next, I began the process of analyzing the data collected by transcribing the interviews from the audio tapes and written notes into Microsoft Word. I then collated responses to each interview question, using both Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel to collect and organize the responses. Though I relied primarily on the transcripts of the interviews and the information collected in the cumulative data file for my analysis, there were times when I also referred to the following materials: audio tapes of the interviews, informal writing samples, and essays written by the students interviewed.

Defining Authorship(s) and Their Rhetorical Context(s)

The findings from the CWE study affirmed not only the dominance of the Romantic model of authorship[5] in student definitions of the term *author*, but offered insight into the attributes of the rhetorical context students associated with that model. In their interviews, students defined authors as individuals who write for a large audience and without prompting. Reflective of the findings from Timothy Murnen's 2001/2002 survey of undergraduates and Ritter's 2004/2005 survey[6], the comments from students involved in my 2005 study suggested that for the vast majority of students, *author* is a high status term applicable only to those who compose effortlessly and effectively, publish books, and write for a large audience:

Student Definitions of the Term *Author*

Student	Definition
Christine Cummings	A writer of books....I don't come to mind!
Eliza Edwards	When you're an author you're writing knowing that others are going to be reading your works.
Celia Fitzpatrick	Someone who is able to put their thoughts onto paper that can relate to others. I wish I could.

John Hernandez	When I think author I think of someone who's published. Because we don't make ourselves authors. If I write a paper, it doesn't make me an author. If it says Harper Collins on it then obviously somebody else thought it was good enough to publish.
Patricia Johnson	[For] authors [writing] is something they love to do.
Lisa Monroe	An author is someone who writes a book and puts his ideas on paper....[I don't consider myself an author because] I'm thinking about the selling part....I don't consider that anything I write would have any buyers.
Susan Patterson	An author is someone who sees [writing] beyond a hobby, it is who they are, it is a career
Daniel Stein	I generally associate authors with somebody who has a published work but not always. I associate authors with larger works.
Jennifer Stevens	Author has more prestige attached to it [compared to writer]. When I think of an author I'm thinking about more formal work. I guess more complex.

Informed by their understanding of the publishing market, as well as by various received notions of the author inside and outside of the composition classroom, students defined authors as "[people] who see writing as being beyond a hobby," and as a term that should be applied only to those individuals for whom writing is "something he or she has to do," "a career," or "an act that will lead to something being published."

The idea that a set of external conditions must be in place for an individual to consider him or herself an author was one that many students expressed. Students were generally unable to situate themselves in the rhetorical context they associated with the term *author* and described this context as one that they would probably never participate in, citing, in particular, their lack of inspiration and originality, as well as the absence of a large and receptive readership, as reasons why they would not be comfortable applying the term to themselves. In their discussion of why they did not consider themselves authors, three students, Edwards, Hernandez, and Monroe directly linked authorship with publishing, while the remaining six explained that what differentiated them from authors was a lack of inspiration, motivation, or ability.

Attributes Required for Student to Conceive of Him- or Herself as an Author

Christine Cummings	I don't feel that I'm capable of producing something so wonderful and imaginative [as authors are]. When I read other peoples' writing you can picture the events when you read it. They can picture the whole room first and visualize the whole atmosphere and no I can't do that. I'm a factual writer.
Celia Fitzpatrick	Because a lot of the thoughts I have I do not put to paper. They sound good in my head. But they just stay in my head and I don't write anything down.
Patricia Johnson	I don't think I work as hard as authors do. I kind of do my writing, read it over and hand it in. I don't look back to it.
Susan Patterson	I've never written anything outside the purview of class or work, which has just been for me to share myself.
Daniel Stein	I've only written shorter pieces. Basically everything I've written has been assigned except for when I was young. When I was younger I did write [without it being assigned].
Jennifer Stevens	It makes me nervous because I think I want to write someday but I don't know if I will be able to. There is so much that I would like to write about. It is really big, like wow, an author.
Eliza Edwards	My name is not on a publication.
John Hernandez	When I think author I think of someone who's published.
Lisa Monroe	I'm thinking about the selling part. I don't consider that anything I write would have any buyers.

Though students cited a range of reasons why they were not comfortable referring to themselves as authors, the one constant that all shared was the fact that they were lacking access to something—a certain kind of purpose or audience—that would allow them to position themselves as authors.[7]

One of the hypotheses of the study was that the two terms—author and writer—might be defined and used by students in distinct ways depending on a student's sense of authority in the rhetorical context of academic writing. While two distinct groups emerged in the study, rather than dividing into groups of authors and writers, as was my hypothesis, the students instead divided into two groups: one group made up of those students who were

comfortable consistently referring to themselves as writers (Hernandez, Patterson, and Stein) and another made up of those students who described themselves as non-writers (Cummings and Fitzpatrick), not-yet-writers (Edwards and Stevens), or sometimes-writers (Harrison, Johnson, and Monroe).

Student Definitions of the Term *Writer*

John Hernandez	Someone who's able to communicate and convey.
Susan Patterson	I think anyone could be a writer, it's just an expression of ideas and thoughts. I don't think everyone is a writer; not everyone writes, not everyone has the ability to write.
Daniel Stein	[I define writer] much more broadly [than author], somebody who writes anything. It is a self-definition.
Christine Cummings	I write, but I am not a writer.... When I say writer or when you say writer I think of something published. Anyone who writes something professionally.
Celia Fitzpatrick	I generalize a writer as something that is a natural thing and for me it is a struggle
Eliza Edwards	If you got paid for it, [if] you could earn a living [then you are a writer]. Most people have to make a living and if you're serious about writing it takes a lot of your time and time is your most precious commodity.
Jennifer Stevens	Someone who doesn't procrastinate, who knows what they are doing and just does it.
James Harrison	If I'm writing [a] professor a letter as a friend, I can write my thoughts and maybe there's some bad grammar. If I'm writing [to] my instructor, then my grammar and everything has to be correct and that's when I'm a writer.... So sometimes I'm a writer and sometimes I'm not.
Patricia Johnson	I'm a writer when I'm in that mood.
Lisa Monroe	[I'm] not always [a writer]. My own writing is OK but my own writing versus college writing I don't live up to that standard. The standard is to write a paper, you know, it is like the end of the rainbow, I'm dreaming of it, I can see what the goal is, but even with the third draft, I was still edited and that third draft is what I would have liked to have written on the first draft.

Discerning the similarities and differences amongst and between the two groups—those students who were comfortable consistently identifying

themselves as writers and those who were not— became the focus of my analysis. What emerged as a key difference between the groups was the extent to which each clearly separated the definitions of the terms *author* and *writer*. Those students who were comfortable consistently identifying themselves as writers defined the term *writer* as separate and distinct from the term *author*, whereas those students who did not clearly separate the two terms, but instead used elements of one definition to inform their definition of the other, were not comfortable consistently identifying themselves as writers.

In the former group, students not only clearly separated their definitions of the terms author and writer, but they also assigned a unique rhetorical context to each term. In their definitions of the term writer, students mentioned, each in his or her own way, that "everybody writes" and "everybody is a writer" or "everybody could be a writer."[8] They considered being a writer a role that "anyone" could play, as opposed to an identity reserved for unique individuals, or "someone." In contrast, students who were not comfortable consistently applying the term writer to themselves defined a writer as a subject position that they might attain based on some type of change or the acquisition of certain attributes, in other words, in terms strikingly similar to the terms they used to define the term author. Two of the three students who considered themselves writers "sometimes," defined a writer as one who adheres to standards of correctness: Harrison explained that he considered himself a writer only when he was "writing correctly," and Johnson perceived herself as a writer only when she had "attained a certain academic standard." Likewise, the four students who answered "no" or "not yet" to the question all defined the term *writer* as demarcating a subject position or identity they might attain if something changed. For instance, if they were published or paid for their writing, or if they did not procrastinate with their writing.

During the course of my analysis, I came to realize that it was not the term author or writer per se that was significant, but the model of authorship that informed a student's individual understanding of each term. What became evident was that while a Romantic model of authorship was uniformly informing student definitions of the term *author*, this was not the case in student definitions of the term *writer*. Instead, some students used the Romantic model of authorship as the basis for their definition and others did not. Importantly, those students who did not use the Romantic model in their definitions of the term *writer* relied on an alternate model of authorship to define the term. In this alternate model, students emphasized the experience of authorship as an act, series of acts, or process, as opposed

to authorship as ownership of a unique product. In their definitions of the rhetorical context associated with this alternate model, students commented that it was possible for anyone with the ability to write to participate in such a rhetorical context. In contrast, students made it clear that only some can participate in the rhetorical context associated with the Romantic model of authorship. Thus, whereas one aspect of authorship—authorship-as-experience—was one that some students had access to, none of the students in the study reported having access to authorship-as-ownership.

"Authorships and Audience: Dialogic vs. Performance-Based Constructions"

Students who clearly distinguished between an alternate model of authorship and the Romantic model of authorship that described their relationship to audience in an academic writing context in ways that were distinct from those students who did not distinguish between the two models and aspects of authorship. The first group described their relationship to audience as dialogic; in other words, they were able to project themselves not only as writers but also as imagined readers of their own work. In both their interviews and in their writing samples, these students approached the writing of academic essays from a place of knowing how to position themselves as interlocutors with their audience/reader and with the purpose and language of academic writing. These students described themselves "talking with" an audience and purpose, which they had in some manner internalized. They also mentioned, each in their own way, that they wrote these papers not only for the teacher but also for other imagined audience members and, what was most noteworthy, for themselves.

Student Comments on Audience in An Academic Writing Context: Students Who Distinguish Between a Romantic Model of Authorship and an Alternate Model

Daniel Stein	The professor is the audience for an academic essay and I try to anticipate what is expected of me and the points that are expected and stylistically as well. But in terms of the overall piece I have to satisfy myself and the professor. I also shouldn't forget my wife; she is also part of the audience.
Susan Patterson	[With academic writing] the audience is the professor but I know what is expected of me.

John Hernandez	[At school] the audience is the professor. But it is also for my friends and family. They read my papers. I wrote a paper in 2003 and it was an "A" paper and I gave it to friends and family because I thought it was good work.... Writing the paper I imagine the professor but I also imagine that I'm working at Time magazine or something like that. That it is high quality and it can be conveyed to anybody. I try to put myself at a high level and get myself to a point where I can write the paper.

From these comments, it is apparent that these students, who all express the fact of having internalized their audience, place themselves at a level of parity with their audience, including the professor, and are able to identify with their audience in an academic writing context.

In contrast, those students whose definition of authorship is informed by the Romantic model defined audience as a controlling authority that they were either unable or rarely able to establish communication with in an academic writing context. This group also defined their experience of writing academic discourse as being primarily monologic, or an act of "reciting for" an audience:

Student Comments on Audience in An Academic Writing Context: Students Who DO NOT Distinguish Between a Romantic Model of Authorship and an Alternate Model

Christine Cummings	I'm writing to make sure that I'm supporting my position. I make sure it is grammatically correct. We all write for the teacher. At school, I can't say that I do put myself in the professor's position.
Eliza Edwards	I pay attention to my academic work and look at grammar and clarity with an eye on getting a good grade.
Celia Fitzpatrick	Audience is the professor. I wasn't thinking about anyone reading [my essays] except the professor. I sometimes visualize what [a professor will] say about certain things, and I think "oh no, she's not going to like that so delete."
James Harrison	With [academic essays], it is always "is it enough," is it the right grammar, is it the right paragraph structure. I don't want to graduate unless my professors know that I have achieved good academic writing skills.
Patricia Johnson	My audience for my academic essays is the professor.

Lisa Monroe	I wrote these papers for my professors. This is something I wrote to get a grade. If a professor is my audience, and one person can be an audience, then I guess the professor was that. These [papers] were put together to perform for the professor.
Jennifer Stevens	[The professors] are all different, they all want something different in their papers. And when I don't sound or express what they want the grade is lower.

The emergence of a clear distinction between one group of students defining their relationship to audience in an academic writing context as dialogic and another defining their relationship to audience as monologic relates quite closely to one of the key findings from a longitudinal study of freshman writers at Harvard University. Discussing the findings from the study, which began in 1997, Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz write:

> When students begin to see writing as a transaction, an exchange in which they can "get and give," they begin to see a larger purpose for writing.... If there is one great dividing line in our study between categories of freshmen, the line falls between students who continue throughout the year not to "see a greater purpose in writing than completing an assignment" and freshmen who believe they can "get and give" when they write--between students who make the paradigm shift and those who don't. Students who continue to see writing as a matter of mechanics or as a series of isolated exercises tend never to see the ways in writing can serve them as a medium in which to explore their own interests. (139-140)

In the CWE study, there was also a clear difference between those students who described their relationship to audience in an academic writing context as dialogic, or an exchange, and those who described their relationship to audience as monologic, or following directions. Those in the former group appear to no longer be objectifying the audience and purpose of academic writing, but to have in some sense internalized both. Thus, rather than performing for the instructor in the sense of trying to reach a certain externally imposed goal or standard, these students were performing the role of an academic writer in, as Miller explains, the same way "an actor who concretizes a script when performing in the face of unstable but enabling theatrical conventions" (*Rescuing the Subject* 15).

Some methods for helping those students who do not currently experience their relationship to audience in academic writing as dialogic towards an experience of audience as dialogic did emerge. Students reported that they had established a dialogic relationship to audience with specific writing projects and in experiences with non-academic writing. Of the seven students who generally experienced audience as a controlling authority in academic writing, three students described a change in their relation to their audience when they were particularly engaged in a topic:

> With My *Their Eyes Were Watching God* paper, I wrote that last paragraph with me in it, and I felt that no matter what I got for that paragraph it didn't matter.... The teacher said to move it to the beginning [to use it as a thesis statement] and I needed it at the end. I love this paragraph and I didn't know where else to put it. I couldn't find a place for it and I left it there and it was important to me. I was a rebel at that moment. I'm not usually a rebel. I usually try to do my best. It felt different. I was in it. Even if it was one paragraph I put myself in there. (Monroe)

In this particular instance, Monroe was not willing to let the instructor be the authority; instead, she decided to stand up to the instructor. And it was at that point when she had found a place for herself as a participant in the rhetorical context of academic writing. At that moment, Monroe had internalized the audience and purpose of this specific act of writing, as she indicates by her comment that she had been able to make the purpose of the essay her own, i.e., "no matter what I got for that paragraph it didn't matter," and to place herself at a level of parity with her professor/audience, i.e., "the teacher said to move it to the beginning and I needed it at the end." Monroe, who had explained that in an effort to improve her academic essays she is always eager to respond to suggestions made by the professor, acknowledges that something has changed for her in the writing of this particular essay.

Harrison also described a difference in his relationship to purpose, audience, and language when he was writing about a topic that he felt he not only could relate to, but one to which he brought a sense of authority:

> The writing [in the *Their Eyes Were Watching God* essay] was the best writing I did in your class. I got angry there in that paper. And it helped me. To me, it was alright me being angry. These people [i.e., critics] had written books themselves but they had not gone through

> what she had gone through. They attacked the story. What other identity can they relate to other than what they've seen. They were saying Teacake was the average black person at that time. At the end of the story she went back to Mr. Starks. She went back to the town, she went back to her porch there with her friend, at the end of the book she goes back to his house. This critic is saying Teacake is representing the typical African American guy. To me Teacake is a fool.

The internalization of authority that Harrison describes is profound and surprisingly similar to that described by Monroe. In both instances, Monroe and Harrison mention first standing up to the authority of the instructor, choosing to continue with their projects on their terms, and then finding a new kind of authority in relation to the academic discourse community.

Stevens described a change in her relationship to audience in her experience of writing of an opinion essay on the topic of the atomic bomb.

> [After] writing an opinion paper on the atomic bomb, [which] I thought was a callous act on behalf of the U.S., the professor challenged my opinion and asked me things like "well, what if your son was there, and hindsight is always 20/20" and I said, "well, my son wasn't there and maybe I don't have 20/20 hindsight, but this is my opinion and this is what I think." I guess I was like, this is my opinion and this is what it is. I felt like I'm not going to change it just to comply with what I think you want me to say.

Her ability to challenge the authority of the instructor appears to translate into a different relationship to the academic writing context with this particular writing project.

Similarly, a sense of authority was achieved in relationship to audience for Cummings and Johnson when they described their experiences of writing at work, where they appear to be more confident putting themselves in the position of the reader:

> At work, yes [there is an audience.] I try to be objective. I do read what I've written as though I'm out there in the field as if I'm the recipient of the writing. I have to have two-views: the employee view and the policy view since the union will read this and will make an appeal if there is anything wrong with what is being written. I imagine transit workers reading this. I stay away from large words.

> I try to be as clear as possible. I have to write step procedures, really explain things. (Cummings)

> When I'm at my job and I know I have to write a parent a note, I think about what their reaction is going to be when I write "because [your child] didn't nap they're in a cranky mood." Will they be OK, will they be upset? (Johnson)

When asked why they were unable to achieve the same relationship to audience when writing in an academic context, Cummings and Johnson remarked that they were not able to put themselves in the professor's position. Both also clearly differentiated between the purpose of writing at work and the purpose of academic writing and saw few relationships between the two scenes of writing.

While Johnson and Cummings compared their ability to establish a dialogue and place themselves at a level of parity with their audience in different scenes of writing, Fitzpatrick discussed the impact instructor comments have on her ability to establish an open line of communication with her audience in an academic writing context:

> To take criticism is very hard, particularly if you feel that you've done a lot of work. With my thesis statement [in a recent class], the professor started by saying: "Well, I don't know how much time you spent on this" which to me was a negative right away. And I shut down immediately when he said that. I thought: "this man does not like me" and I didn't even hear what he was saying after he said that because I know that I had spent a great deal of time on it and showed it to a couple of people and they had said "it's ok, it's interesting." but the bottom line was that he said it was too broad and I felt that he could have said that in a nicer way and he had written notes and it was this whole thing just to tell me it was too broad. Now I'm staring at a blank piece of paper. I've been intimidated to the point where I cannot write.

Linking her ability to compose freely with her relationship to audience, Fitzgerald contrasted this experience to those she has had with writing when she feels there is an open line of communication with the professor. In these instances, she explained that she derived a sense of authority from this relationship and it actually *enabled* her to write.

Towards a Pedagogy of Authorial Construction

The findings from the CWE study align closely with those from Murnen's ethnographic study of authorship in the composition classroom. In his study, Murnen also identifies multiple authorships operating in the discourse of the composition classroom. One, which he refers to as "Authorship as Status," is "a right and a privilege of an elite group of writers who have been published" and the other, "Authorship as Process," is "an act or series of activities that writers (including student writers) engage in" (26). Furthermore, just as the CWE study confirms the change that occurs in a student's relationship to audience when she is writing with a sense of engagement and authority derived from writing about something she has a unique perspective on, Murnen emphasizes the importance of crafting writing assignments that present students with the opportunity "to stake out ideological positions in the process (and product) of writing" (266). The importance of how these student texts are received by instructors in reinforcing student experiences of authorship was another finding shared in both Murnen's study and the CWE study. For, as Murnen found in his ethnographic study and as was confirmed by the CWE study, "what was being composed in the composing process was not simply a text, but also student identity" (19). Concurring that text and identity formation are linked, Howard likewise proposes that "student writing must be accorded the same respect as professional writing: it must be treated as subject rather than object formation" ("Plagiarisms" 796).

While there is no easy answer to the question of how to assist students in experiencing authorship, pedagogies that allow students to participate in the construction of the rhetorical context that they are writing for may enable students to experience writing as a transactional activity, which appears to be an integral part of authorial construction. Creating writing situations in which students understand that their writing has a clear purpose and audience, as all writing in the world does, will reinforce their experiences as actual writers and, ultimately, of authorship-as-experience. In such a pedagogy, *being a writer* is not an identity, but a role that one inhabits when involved in the act of writing. This then shifts the emphasis of writing pedagogy away from one based on exhortation, which is meant to aid students in the revelation of an identity that is presumed to be already latent, to one based on conversation, which asks students to consider how subject positions that they currently use to define themselves might be expressed through the act of writing and how certain writing situations may require the creation of

new subject positions. Such a pedagogy is simultaneously informed by social constructivist and expressionist theories, particularly through its focus on voice, which is conceived not as a quest for one essential voice, but as multivocality. By modeling conversations with specific audiences and purposes and by making the audience and purpose of the academic writing context malleable fictions, as opposed to fixed standards or facts, students may be able to redefine what they thought was an exclusive rhetorical context as one that is actually much more like rhetorical contexts where they have experienced a sense of responsibility and belonging.

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Notes

1. For the purposes of the qualitative study, "academic writing" was defined as writing that was being written for a college course that would be evaluated and assessed by an instructor. While I do not believe that "academic writing" can or should be defined uniformly, for the purposes of the study, it was necessary to adopt a single definition of the term which was appropriate to the student writing being discussed.
2. Having been appointed Assistant Professor at CUNY's New York City College of Technology in 2008, it is my hope to re-create a version of the qualitative study with students enrolled there.
3. The extent to which data from a qualitative study focused on adult-learners can be interpolated and related to undergraduate writing students of traditional age is open to interpretation. While there are many differences

between adult-students and traditional-age-students, a recent national study of college freshmen at two-year colleges indicates that in terms of their attitudes towards confidence in writing, the two populations are almost identical. See Noel-Levitz "2010 Freshman Attitudes at Two Year Colleges: A Closer Look."

4. Permission to use student comments in reports and discussions of the research findings was granted by the students involved in the study with the understanding that actual student names would not be used. Based on the work of Amy Robillard and others regarding the status and treatment of student subjects in composition research, I plan, in future studies, to ask permission of students to use their real names. For reports from this study, I have assigned pseudonyms to each student and I have made the decision to refer to students using their last names in the interest of treating student comments as I would other primary or secondary source material.
5. While definitions and discussions of the Romantic model of authorship are very complex, as a functional definition for the qualitative study, I use Woodmansee's definition in "The Genius and the Copyright": "In contemporary usage an author is an individual who is solely responsible - and therefore exclusively deserving of credit - for the production of a unique work." (426). For further discussion of the term, see Jaszi (1991), Woodmansee and Jaszi (1994), McGann, and Saunders.
6. It is noteworthy that almost half of the students in Ritter's survey defined an author according to the Romantic model and well over half (61%) of the students did not perceive writing on the internet to be authored. As Ritter points out, this is leading to a situation in which students are both alienated from authorship in the writing classroom and defining textual artifacts online as part of a cultural commons or, to phrase it in less idealistic terms, not belonging to anyone and therefore not subject to laws against theft.
7. One student, James Harrison, defined the term author in terms that were distinct. He defined the term as one that applies to "anyone who authors anything."
8. For a discussion of dialectics/paradoxes similar to the one described here of authority in writing existing not as a sense of ownership but of contribution and communication, see Spiegelman on the dialectic of public/private in writing groups and Bazerman on the communality/originality paradox.

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