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DISCIPLINARY PERMEATIONS: COMPLICATING THE “PUBLIC” AND
“PRIVATE” DUALISM IN COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

by

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DISCIPLINARY PERMEATIONS: COMPLICATING THE “PUBLIC” AND
“PRIVATE” DUALISM IN COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

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University of Nebraska, 2012

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As Composition and Rhetoric rose in disciplinary status and academic legitimacy the discourse practice of negation, the positioning of texts in oppositional binaries that set the “new” over the “old,” the “novel” over the “familiar,” became so embedded in academic tradition it now seems to be an inherited part of scholarship instead of an individual’s rhetorical choice and deliberate *ethos* strategy. Negation, when one idea or set of ideas constructed by another is critiqued, advocated, and/or redeveloped by another scholar, is a discourse practice firmly established in the Rhetorical Tradition as part of Socratic dialogues, reappears in “modern rhetoric”, and is writ large within academe. To practice negation is to be the quintessential qualitative researcher, even as negation proves limiting to the trajectory of both logic and the making of new knowledge. Ideas, theories, and their implications are posited as opponents within a competitive market instead of interdependent collaborations building a body of knowledge within the discipline. This qualitative analysis reflects John Muckelbauer’s (2008) invitation to explore an idea/text beyond the “critique, advocate, and/or develop” strategies of negation (Muckelbauer 43) in order to forge “experimental pathways” toward interrelated and collaborative knowledge. By bringing plurality to inquiry, I position knowledge as a constellation of interrelated ideas instead of a singularity “discovered.” This postmodern approach to inquiry and analysis will demonstrate the circuitry, the interrelatedness of meanings, while at the same time reflecting the field’s larger commitments to equity, representation, and social justice that have not yet been reflected within the dominant discourses brokered within the field. Rhetorical choice, even within the professional text, thus becomes personal-public, a permeated dualism at once mapped and traced.

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For my mothers, Lindy, Debbie, and Chris

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWARD, VERY FORWARD	I
SECTION I: HISTORICIZING THE PUBLIC AND PERSONAL.....	1
SECTION II: AN EXPLORATION OF AFFIRMATION.....	16
SECTION III: IMPLYING CLOSURE FOR THE SAKE OF GENRE.....	21
APPENDIX: WORKS CITED.....	25

FOREWARD, VERY FORWARD

As a victim of domestic violence, my personal and physical boundaries were the battleground, the spaces in which violation, betrayal, abuses, terrors, and the totality of my experiences rattled about, transfiguring both my sense of self and my own sense of narrative. Secrets, brokered and kept, shame, high stakes negotiations over small stakes issues, and a prevailing sense of hopelessness took root in every moment of my life. Far beyond the public service announcements, beyond the public discourses, the survivors' stories, the justice system, the ways American culture frames and discusses domestic violence, is the absolute and total loss of control over one's own story. The autonomous right to write one's narrative, to speak, act, and embody the language of one's heart is lost, consumed by the one willing to wield violence against the mind and the flesh in pursuit of control. One's boundaries become mythical, theoretical, as nothing in one's practices can testify to the glorious freedom of personal language, the story we write for ourselves beyond the stories others write upon us. An abusive relationship is a binary construction with each end of the continuum clearly marked. Whatever you think, experience, and contemplate is defined and limited in that dualistic structure. Even as I looked for meanings and possibilities, the vector of thought was still anchored to either the abuser or the victim. Imagining possibility outside of the structure, beyond that binary, felt like gazing into an abyss, the dark void and black hole that is the unknown. Language failed me as a site for thinking because abuse creates a lexicon of the unspoken, the hidden, and in contemplating the story of one's life, all there is to do is fall through

the words you would most need to say in order to be delivered from the pain of circumstance and the material conditions of reality.

One would think that seeking help, going to the local police and telling one's story would be the beginning of a reclamation, an opportunity to step outside of the binary and into autonomy. Ironically, loss of autonomy is cyclical and repetitive as the story written is at once the victim's and another's. The victim alone stands before authority and assistance, and in order to work toward owning one's own narrative, one must submit to the ways the justice system collects story, shapes and distorts, files, and performs on her behalf. Personal boundaries are yet again transgressed as one is subjected to the customs and questions others determine. To testify, to stand in public and tell one's story is to also lose the ability to transmit the personal narrative as experienced in ways that feel healing and whole. The lawyers and the courts, the investigators and assistants, listen and cull from the victim's narratives only what fits into the predetermined structures of penal code and process while helping a prosecutor build an argument. When I told my story, when I shared the stories of my family with those agency representatives appointed by city and state to assist victims of crime, I watched well meaning and skilled people sift through my story for what would work for them in their mission to hold someone accountable. I listened, realizing that within the justice system I would be forced to embody that narrative yet again, perform and wallow in a story I would never have written for myself had I the choice and the basic human right of autonomy. My personal boundaries were yet again violated as I answered deeply personal questions within a very public and official rhetorical site. It is through these very painful

experiences of my story that I learned boundaries are truly a matter of privilege, of preference and autonomy, and not everyone gets to experience the pleasure of the personal and public dualism without complicated permeations as the two blur together to shape one's story.

I could, then, write a lengthy treatise about the re-victimization of domestic violence survivors, but even this would be anchored to the binary structure of abuse itself. John Muckelbauer (2008) calls this logical trap, a problem with change (3). Though I would be making an attempt to critique social dynamics and institutional structures, as Muckelbauer asserts most scholars do (3), because dialectic negation is an expected performance within scholarship, I'd be stuck in a binary postmodern theories have yet to dismantle, that of "the same" and "the different" (Muckelbauer 5). Critique, in its various genres, is still a binary of one (person, text, idea) against another (person, text, idea) because the theatre of engagement, the logical structure inherent in critique, is in itself a limiting binary construction. Even as one draws from scholarship to establish proofs, to complicate or enrich the critique itself, the primary structure of labeling, identifying, and then overcoming the gap, the space between these mapped rhetorical strategies, however rigorous and thoughtful, is still limited in trajectory because it's anchored to two points. Mobility of ideas, engagement, and possibility is limited to just that space between.

Meaning, the ways in which one must champion ideas, critique others' ideas, and then assert one's own thinking as "implications" – a familiar argument structure within

academic and nonacademic arguments – still affirm a binary structure that limits the actual movement of thought between familiar and novel, from old and new, without moving outside of the binary logic embedded in these writing and thinking practices (3).

As Muckelbauer writes:

That is, whether the stakes are a new concept, a different social structure, a divergent form of subjectivity, a fresh reading, or an innovative technology, difference and novelty only emerge by somehow overcoming or negating particular others – outdated concepts, oppressive social structures, limited models of subjectivity, etc. In other words, for both traditionalists and non-traditionalists, change is always and everywhere the effect of overcoming and negation (x).

Theodor Adorno, offers dramatic affirmation of this concept when he writes, “Unquestionably, one who submits to the dialectical discipline has to pay dearly in the qualitative variety of experience ... cognition must bow to it, unless concretion is once more to be debased into the ideology it starts becoming in fact” (4). Within negation, negative dialectics, even as one challenges binary structures that are representative of larger power structures within language and culture, the trajectory of ideas is confined, limited. Inquiry itself, ironically, is restrained by logic. Acts of negation, however, should not be confused with engagement. Within the discipline, there is a lexicon for negation that is not recognized as such. Words such as “challenge,” “complicate,” “deconstruct” – just to name a few – are polite, certainly, but they are also symbolic of the ways in which negation is tied to physicality, to the ways in which a body enacts a force on a text. On the practical level, and through my lens of experience, negation as practiced inside and outside scholarship strikes me as a socially approved form of violence. Lives are lived within language and symbols. There are, in any text, people

connected to (and sometimes disconnected from) the words. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson note, argument itself is often framed by American culture in terms of warfare (4). “Though there is no physical battle,” they write, “there is a verbal battle, and the structure of an argument – attack, counterattack, etc. – reflects this” (4). As Lakoff and Johnson remind us, our culture places a value on a mythic objectivism, particularly in public discourses such as media and scholarship (189), where empiricist thinking and writing are positioned opposite the personally poetic – the subjective (191). Citing the Romantic poets as those who rekindled humanistic fires during the Industrial Revolution, Lakoff and Johnson posit that by doing so, they reinforced the objectivist stance. The objective/subjective binary was codependent as each term defined, in some way, the other. Citing metaphor as “imaginative rationality,” (193) Lakoff and Johnson invite an opportunity to explore an experimental structure that encourages understanding of the world around us, texts, even arguments, based on our interactions. In this sense, texts perform a function as we function, and our personal relationship with any other can be traced and mapped by our own language habits, preferences, and experiences.

Negation, as I position it within this text, is not simply an act of pushing back or down. Certainly, with texts that are dehumanizing of others one would want to negate, to champion, and to overcome. Yet, responding to any form of violence with more violence (however noble), is still, well, violent. To imagine engagement as an affirmation when confronted by violent texts is to re-imagine the dialectic itself by stepping outside of the oppositional framework. According to Muckelbauer, the issue isn’t merely a challenge to postmodern notions of dualisms and binaries, nor is it a reconfiguration of logic – the

invention process used to engage with static terms or positions (5). Conditions for inquiry and engagement become fixed when structured by negation, and the trajectories of writing-as-thinking/ thinking-as-writing become limited. “Positions are not inert places,” he writes, “they are constellations of actions (whether potential or actual)” (5). For example, negation has become fixed in the sense that it is most prevalent in three distinct forms: advocacy, when a privileged concept is emphasized; critique, when an underprivileged concept is advocated; and synthesis, when some “in-between” and indeterminate concept is valorized (Muckelbauer 6-8). Regardless of the style of negation, the transformation itself, the challenge to make new meaning from the old, or to engage in dialectic reasoning with that which has gone before, remains a relatively stable endeavor in the fact that it doesn’t transform beyond the trajectory of the Hegelian negation logic itself. In other words, “While the contents of the positions may change, the structure of negative relations stays the same” (Muckelbauer 11). To move beyond negation, may mean moving beyond the objective tendencies of professional scholarship and toward a subjective construction that creates writing room for personal relationships – the ways language, including hate language, advertising, personal, and public discourses – are interconnected to our own everyday language choices and contexts. Moving beyond negation means giving up the privileged position of opposition in order to follow where thinking and inquiry may lead instead of taking a declared stance, and then performing scholarly argument traditions and negation. It means moving beyond binary constructions and into unfamiliar territory where even “bad” ideas are welcomed and acknowledged as contributors and coordinates to one’s ideas that follow while affirming the journey, the pathway, that lead to one’s ideas.

For example, the alleged separation of “the personal” from “the public,” a binary construction that erases the human connections between text and the embodied acts that come with textual production – inquiry, the acts of reading and discovery, the ways words strum the chords of our inner passions that become professional performances, all the ways writers sit to write and bring their human experiences and emotions to their work – are rendered invisible, unspoken, even erased, by the limited movements we can make within the binary itself and its boundaries. If Lakoff and Johnson are affirmed in their claims that the subjective/objective binary structure is an offshoot of larger cultural and historical moments, then a line of inquiry opens – tentative, uncertain, but open all the same. Is the separation between “the public” and “the personal” just another trope for the separation between objectivity and subjectivity? If so, then negation becomes, in a sense, a mechanism of limitation, of control, a bargaining for the right to share story within a dehumanized structure of tradition and publication.

In other words, in order to speak, and to speak well within academic-public tradition, one must first find personal allies and form alliances, critique “the other” as flawed, then overcome these flaws with carefully constructed implications, without acknowledging the deeply personal experiences of writing and thinking, and the incredible and deeply felt act of writing itself. In order to speak, one must testify while others sort from such testimony what they deem important. The writer/thinker becomes subject to an authoritative mechanism working within the public (in this case, the discipline’s) interest. Yet, to step outside of the structure is to risk, as Muckelbauer

acknowledges, the creation of something unrecognizable, as negation is seemingly inseparable from what scholars are called to do. Perhaps recognition is a privilege itself, the cost of membership that limits what Adorno terms the “qualitative variety of experience.” In order to enrich the qualitative variety within qualitative research, one may have to ride out the discomfort of permeation by restructuring binaries into hyphenated, codependent, and interrelated terms that serve as mere locations, the beginnings of inquiry. In this sense, affirmation is not simply an alternative or oppositional stance to negation (thus a recreation of a binary itself), but a different mode of thinking entirely, one in which ideas are mapped, traced, and explored instead of positioned in competition with one another. For example, instead of positioning “the public” against “the personal,” I imagine a term, something that reflects the nature of how our own interests and passions become our professional calling as scholars and teachers, the work for me is personal-public, interrelated, embodied, and performed.

Enriching my own qualitative experience in this work has meant taking the notion of “public” and “personal” as I’ve encountered it within the discipline, and pointing to the interrelations instead of the oppositional differences. Barbara Kamler, in *Relocating the Personal: A Critical Writing Pedagogy* (2001), invites consideration of spatiality and power, the politics of location and locatedness (171). Personal-public narration, propelled by affirmation instead of dragged down by negation, is allowed mobility once the binary boundaries are permeated. As Kamler notes, there is a need to create distance between the writer and experience, in order to ensure the personal “. . . is relocated in other spaces – political, social, cultural – rather than understood simply as the province of the

private and individual” (Kamler 171). In evoking my personal history as a foreground for my professional work, I am not making mere use of drama to intrigue or capture an audience. Instead, I am presenting an individual experience to demonstrate the personal-public construction of violence as a shared experience across contexts. Though violence is contextual, the effects of violence seem to have an interrelated universality even as the intensity and timbre of those effects may vary. In the moment when one feels denied autonomous representation, whether in a personal relationship or a professional tradition, the pain of that denial is on the same register. Fear, discomfort, even displacement; self-doubt, recrimination, and a sense of futility; must be overcome either by a Nietzschean “will to power,” or a bevy of rhetorical strategies commonly known as disruptions or complications. We all, when in the face of power, bargain for our right to personal expression, even when that power presents itself as a Foucauldian panoptic structure within discourse traditions inside and outside of scholarship. Power need not be visible to be felt, to truncate inquiry, and to inhibit one’s sense of freedom to speak, write, and think.

Yet, if the binary boundaries become ruptured, permeated by our own refusal to take positions of negation, the personal-public becomes a tremendous source of both affirmation and inquiry. Yes, the risk is that some discourses will not be easily recognized, labeled within the confines of genre, and welcomed into the fold of comfortable categorization, but the opportunity to move beyond binaries and their cognitive limitations will require that sort of risk in this postmodern era. John Muckelbauer terms the risk itself as “imprecision,” when explanation yields to

demonstration (xi), as the writer experiences “the indistinguishable aspects of subjectivity and sociality” (9) in order to disrupt negation and find indeterminate, infinite and in-between spaces for inquiry and exploration (9). By demonstrating how our personal experiences and social locations shape our public lives – our vocations, ethical commitments, and performance of Self in front of Others – are interrelated, intertwined, I hope to nurture lines of inquiry through affirmation. In this text, I begin with mapping coordinate points in my thinking without positioning myself against other ideas in order to write room for affirming, encouraging, and more complex inroads to inquiry. There will be imprecision, of this I am sure, but I am willing to risk the discomfort in order to find a pathway toward understanding the personal-public. It seems to me that meaningful inquiry leads only to more meaningful inquiry (that’s the pain and yet the promise), but the goal of affirmation is to invite imprecision as a tool for exploration. As John Muckelbauer writes:

Rather than extracting claims to be advocated, critiqued, or developed, and rather than just diagnosing the performative movement within the writing, an affirmative inclination encounters writing as an experimental pathway, a relay on an intensive, inventive circuit (43).

The circuitry demonstrated in this thesis begins with a historical view of the tensions between “the personal” and “the public” Susan Jarratt explores in *Rereading the Sophists* (1991). From there, I will write my way toward an exploration of historical tensions between ideological stances among a few of Composition and Rhetoric’s well-known writers, such as James Berlin, Lil Brannon, and C.H. Knoblauch. Relying on affirmation as a means through which to explore analysis, I will then demonstrate the interrelations between Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald’s *Available Means: An Anthology of*

Women's Rhetoric(s) (2001) and affirmation as a rhetorical strategy. My goal is not to provide a determinate answer to a thesis question, but to sponsor inquiry that reaches beyond the binary construction of personal v. public, and toward a more inviting and inclusive exploration of the personal-public as a site of future inquiry.

SECTION I: HISTORICIZING THE PUBLIC AND PERSONAL

Considering its histories, it could be said that the field of Composition and Rhetoric has fostered two distinct traits in its evolution from Classic rhetorical theories and practices, to a specialized field in American universities and colleges. One of these traits could be called extrovert, in the sense that limited-public, published discourses generated by scholars have an outward trajectory as contributions to the Rhetoric and Composition canon. As Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg note, “Rhetoric in its various incarnations has been a powerful force in public affairs and in education for most of its existence since the fifth century B.C.E., when it developed in Greek probate courts and flourished under Greek democracy” (1). In Plato’s *Gorgias*, even as Socrates presses Gorgias for a definition of rhetoric, as Gorgias himself states the extroverted self-to-public nature of oratory and audience, even as Plato’s Socrates seems to find a deep philosophical cleft between rhetoric and truth, he uses a communal, dialogic structure of self-to-other. Aristotle claims this person-to-a-public trait, the trajectory of self in relationship to others, when he writes, “The genres of rhetoric are three in number, which is the number of the types of audience” (80). Without an audience, without community with one or more listeners, the rhetorician cannot fulfill this trajectory of extroversion, the rhythms of persuasion. Cicero constructs the ideal orator-as-rhetorician as “...one who is able to speak in court or in deliberative bodies so as to prove, to please and to sway or persuade” (Bizzell & Herzberg 339).

This classical sense of public remains with us, appearing in diverse ways, from multiple rhetorical, theoretical, and pedagogical perspectives, even those that claim to be markedly different, such as the divisions between “current-traditionalists” and “postmodernists,” between the “old” and the “new.” Scholars such as James Berlin, Robert Connors, John Brereton, James Slevin, C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg – just to name a few – have chronicled, collected, organized, and sorted histories with remarkable skill and thorough care. Despite differences between their individual preferences and/or ideologies, collectively their works provide a breathtaking view of the field’s extroversion, the public sky of possibility for writing and speaking. Charting rhetorical stars, from Berlin’s claim that, “Writing courses prepare students for citizenship in a democracy, for assuming their political responsibilities as leaders or simply as active participants” (189); to Knoblauch and Brannon’s claim, “For it is in the creative rewriting of past discourse that we witness the progress of learning; and it is the progress of learning that insures individual growth and the perpetuation of culture” (72); to Connor’s assertion that, “The true researcher was expected, from his seminar papers through his dissertation (which was required in *every case* to be published) to show his worth as a scholar by disseminating his findings through a system of professional publications” (177); to Bizzell and Herzberg’s claim, “Rhetoric has always been concerned with political action and the search for knowledge” (16), a constellation of extroverted agendas for and of Rhetoric emerges.

Through these works and others, the extroverted traits of Composition and Rhetoric became more visible, allowing us to see what we could not, or would not allow

ourselves to see before. This visibility, too, helped us to see what was not visible in order to “transcend” what Kenneth Burke terms, “terministic screens,” the constructed reflections of Rhetoric’s historical “realities” that also named by not naming, the deflection of other constructed realities. Each contributor to the collective history of Rhetoric asserted key terms, and those terms framed the nature and trajectory of the contributor’s work. As Burke writes, “Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct attention to one field rather than to another” (Burke 1343). Robert Connors, in his framing of Composition-rhetoric, positions the field as “...a modern rhetoric, quickly changing and adapting, driven by potent social and pedagogical needs, and running on the rails of an ever cheaper, ever quicker, and ever more competitive printing technology,” (7) yet the fast track of modernity was not without its benefits. The extroversion and public debate, broadened and deepened by print technology, made it possible get a closer (albeit less comfortable) look at what was once hidden, subsumed by dominant discourses in the field. In other words, within the presence of the published work, within the extroversion, other scholars found opportunities by exploring erasures, gaps, absences, and contradictions.

Scholars such as Susan Jarratt, Cheryl Glenn, Joy Ritchie, Kate Ronald, Susan Kates, Karen Foss, Andrea Lunsford, and Susan Miller explored these opportunities to propagate their presence within the public conversations about the field’s histories. From Jarratt, the field receives an invitation to reconsider Plato’s degradation of the sophists as not just history, but also a contemporary current in Western philosophy and scholarship (xxiii). Inviting us to complicate “...certain assumptions about the independent status and

function of narrative and rational argument...” (31), Jarratt opens a middle space between two distinct positions within a dualism: *mythos/logos*. As Jarratt writes:

Curiously absent from many discussions of the emergence of literacy and rationality in the classical period, rhetoric – and particularly sophistic rhetoric – will provide two ways of challenging the dualism of *mythos/logos*. At one end of the historical continuum, we find argument and introspection in the epic; at the other, we examine the role of myth in sophistic contributions to the rational evolution. Relocating the sophists and rhetoric in the “progress” from orality to literacy will work against the historical view of rhetoric bursting out abruptly as a rough-and-ready practice in the fifth century, to be fully realized as a theory only by the next generation (31-2).

Working within and at times, against, this continuum, Jarratt maps a pre-Socratic path of myth – narrative storytelling and the recitals of Homeric epics – as a sophistic art and craft that instructs, explains natural phenomenon, shares social codes, and conveys knowledge about technology and geography (32). As Jarratt notes, the pleasurable, almost transcendental reception of spoken performances in oral culture was an extension of cultural practices that provided contexts, such as “...religious events and competitions, in after-dinner entertainments for all classes, by teachers and students in educational settings, even around the fires of military encampments” (Jarratt citing Havelock 33). Narrative was the site for intellectual engagement and the sharing of history and knowledge, and not a mere poetic trance of *mythos* lacking in philosophical and logical content, or *logos*. “More central to our understanding of the sophists,” Jarratt writes, “the rhetorical moments of the epic – persuasive situations and internal deliberations – supply the most concentrated examples of logic and argument within the larger narrative” (35).

Jarratt's work is a complication of not just the linear history of Rhetoric, but also the dominance of Platonic and Aristotelian logics casting the long, suspicious shadow over pre-Socratic and sophistic logics embedded in cultural practices, including narrative. Drawing from the work of Ruth Finnegan (1977) and M.M. Willcock (1964), Jarratt positions Homer's *Iliad* and similar narrative, poetic works as "published" instead of "transmitted" texts, shaped to suit the both audience and circumstance (36-7). Re-introducing the term *nomos*, Jarratt positions a space between the *mythos/logos* dualism that invites a more generous reading of sophistic rhetoric, pedagogies, and practices. "With the sophists," Jarratt writes, "*nomos*, a self-conscious arrangement of discourse to create politically and socially significant knowledge, enters a middle term between *mythos* and *logos*" (60). The significance of this intermediary term is not simply a matter of vocabulary. The term itself contains a geographical connotation of inclusion, one that is located atop the terrain people inhabit, as well as one that includes the customary, people-centered common law of the time, with each definition built on an assumption of human agency (Jarratt 41). This introduction of the term serves as a fruitful rupture, one that invites us to reconsider place, context, and people as essential to epistemology and its human consequences, the very significance of why thinking, writing, and inquiry matter beyond the comforts of tradition. In this small term, *nomos*, we find room, writing room, to redefine "personal" as essential, as requisite, as the context through which invention and inquiry are possible, instead of limiting the definition of "personal" to just the body, as the body. In this sense the personal – the set of circumstances that the body finds room in which to be relevant to knowledge and discovery, urge teachers and students forward as people and writers instead of becoming trapped in negation. The personal

reflects the essence of who they are, what they think they know and why they think they know it, as well as the intersections of difference and locations from which we think, write, and learn. It is there that the notion of another term, the personal-public, emerges. As writers examine and explore the disjunctions in their interrelated experiences, those disjunctions become spaces for inquiry. Inquiry begins within what Jacques Derrida terms, “contextual rupture” (1483). Though “rupture” is a term that has an action, it is not an action directed at a specific person, a body. Instead, and outside of negation, a ruptured context becomes an opportunity for another round of inquiry as one contemplates the interrelatedness within a context instead of squaring off against (yet) another idea, working to overcome whatever shortcomings that idea may have, and then championing a “new” position. However, contextual rupture, too, requires patience with both ambiguity and questioning. Good questions just lead to better questions, and though academe wants to broker meaning and a body of knowledge, it may be time to offer up inquiries and questions instead. Perhaps then, a public university would actually cultivate and invite public discourses within the context of shared community.

By contrast, and within the paternal privilege of history, Plato’s dialectic method shaped a consciousness on a foundation of distance, critical analysis, and hypotactic logic (Jarratt 34-5). Plato’s sense of structure went beyond metaphysics and philosophy. “Never at ease with the democracy, he laid out a stratified social order in which classes and roles were rigidly defined and power was reserved for the few” (Jarratt 64). In Plato’s *Republic*, as Glaucon, Socrates, and Aeimantus imagine the creation of a “luxurious city,” while sorting jobs, responsibilities, and the interrelated nature of life in

their utopian town, it's interesting to note the men construct an army before they construct an education system (Plato 49). Good guardians and city protectors are compared to the spirit of dogs (Plato 51), and this spirit must be honed by education. To secure loyalty, Socrates posits that as good servants of the city, they must take great care in determining both the lesson and its vessel. "Then we must first of all, it seems, supervise the storytellers," Socrates asserts, before determining that the stories themselves must be sorted to suit their purposes, and "mothers and nurses" must be persuaded to tell only the stories the governors select (Plato 53). Plato's distrust of the poetic, the *mythos* narratives of the sophistic past, becomes evident as Socrates claims that even "the major stories" contain falsehoods. When asked what stories could be considered major in their day, Socrates replies, "Those that Homer, Hesiod, and other poets tell us, for surely they composed false stories, told them to people, and are still telling them" (53).

Socrates objects to the multi-theistic construction of gods as flawed gods possessing human qualities of anger and vengeance, as in Hesiod's *Theogony*, and Homer's *Iliad*. As he critiques poets' framing of the gods in their art, Socrates asserts that human suffering is not of the heavenly realm, handed down by gods, but that when humans are punished, paying a penalty, they are rewarded by the gods for that suffering (Plato 56). Poets who claim otherwise should be banished from the city. "We won't allow poets to say that the punished are made wretched and that it was a god who made them so," Socrates claims (Plato 56). In other words, in the narratives trafficked by culture as well as the sophists, the gods were too similar to humans, and naïve listeners

were at risk of making tremendous interpretative mistakes. “The young can’t distinguish what is allegorical from what isn’t, and the opinions they absorb at that age are hard to erase and apt to become unalterable,” Socrates states as his primary critique of the *very* Homeric and sophistic narratives Jarratt points to as vessels of cultural currency, knowledge, tradition, and lore.

In the work we do with students, in the ways we shape and collect their stories, as they collect and shape their meanings, we can break the long-held, and debilitating claim that “personal writing” is not valuable within “academic” contexts. We can demonstrate how qualitative research, how the collection of stories as data, is what sociologist Brené Brown terms, “data with a soul” (2010). The ways in which students move in and out of courses, departments, disciplines, even as they make their way through curricula and choice, writing courses are often the only true opportunities for reflection, for setting down and getting into contemplative reasoning, dialectic inquiry, class discussion, and a sense of community beyond the social structures universities and colleges provide within dormitories and housing. It’s sometimes their only opportunity, with guidance from instructors and fellow writers, to chronicle their sense of *nomos*, their sense of commonality on the landscape of the institutions in which they work and live. Contextual ruptures become experiments with interrelatedness and metaphor, inquiries into the ways we use language (and it uses us, as Burke would say), as well as moments of enriched qualitative experience and for rationality built upon the imaginative and speculative – the interior nature by which we question our exterior experiences.

As Jarratt notes, Plato would labor greatly to separate myth from logic, to assert that proper statesmanship relied on speaking artfully and logically (34), though in Greek culture the poet's function was to provide practical instruction and moral advice while captivating audiences with mystic tales of the mythic world (Jarratt citing Guthrie 34). In the pre-Socratic eras, it was narrative and not argument that provided, within cultural contexts, the opportunities to consider spiritual, cultural, and intellectual issues, a form of consciousness that required public argument and internal debate prior to the fifth century B.C.E. (Jarratt 35). The ideological and philosophical tension between the sophists and the Socratics, apart from being political while positioning "common" people in opposition to an aristocratic class, were also cultural – an antiquated example of contemporary "culture war" when the aristocratic "high" classes began taking aim at the "lower" classes in a wrestle for power. Much was at stake for the orators and teachers in ancient Athens as those with the powers of persuasion were rewarded in status and monetary wealth. Educated commoners would expect more in life, perhaps demand more, than the portion afforded them under Plato's systemic construction of democracy.

As Samuel Ijessling charts in his historical survey of rhetoric and philosophy, "Rhetoric therefore nearly always has something to do with property, with acquired or supposed rights, and with prestige and privileges" (11). Ijessling asserts that this alone could be cause for Plato's turn against rhetoric and toward conversation (14). According to Ijessling, Plato searches to distinguish between what seems sensible (as in the *mythos*-laden epic, the stories of the gods), and that which is within the "intelligible order" (Truth as divined through dialectic). As Ijessling writes, "The former is the world of appearance,

presentation, opinion (*doxa*) and physics, while the latter is the world of true being, ideal and essence, knowledge (*episteme*) and metaphysics” (14). Ijessling helps to shape the *logos/mythos* dualism within the realm of philosophy, noting that Plato was suspicious of sophists and rhetoric – often linking the two as intertwined – because the strongest orators of the time were so skilled in the illusory, in using probability as a prevailing logic (14). Western metaphysics is born from Plato’s polemical treatises against sophistry, his sense of the differences between appearance and being (Ijessling 15). The consequences have been pervasive and persistent across the historical record of philosophy and rhetoric. As Ijessling writes:

Philosophy and science are extremely critical of rhetoric which is rejected on the grounds that nothing claimed by orators, poets, preachers or authorities exceeds the order of the probable, but merely constitutes opinion (*doxa*), tradition, prejudice, ideology or at least the lack of certainty and inability to withstand doubt and questioning (15).

Within philosophy, too, Plato’s polemics against the sophists have shaped far too much of the philosophical enterprise. As Ijessling writes:

Yet another consequence of Plato’s polemic against the sophists and rhetoricians is that such a thing as metaphysics could arise and moreover a metaphysics with an onto-theological structure, constituting a massive foundation on which many philosophers since Plato have continually been building. Perhaps today the edifice is collapsing on all sides, but this is essentially related to a radical reflection on language and to the clearly perceptible rehabilitation of rhetoric (15).

As Ijessling notes, without words, human relations, law, politics, state, judicial procedure, education, science, literature, and a host of other interactions would be impossible (19).

“For this reason,” Ijessling writes, “philosophy can never regard language as just one

more subject of reflection. Language is rather a transcendental *conditio sine qua non* of every philosophy” (19).

When one ponders the residue of Platonic thought on the body of philosophical and rhetorical scholarship, particularly the sense that both were in conflict that arose to a peak in Plato’s day (Ijessling 7), Jarratt’s work, particularly her assertions regarding *nomos*, invites us to reconsider the philosophical and cultural stakes of the *mythos/logos* dualism and constructions of the personal-public. By inserting a term between the binary construction Jarratt makes it possible for us to reflect on the culture of narrative beyond mere genre considerations of the epic, allegory, theatre, and story; beyond a philosophical continuum with the Sophists on one side and Plato on the other. The sophistic use of narrative reflected an inclusion of human agency, and as Jarratt notes, Plato and his student, Aristotle, would find this inclusion unacceptable. As Jarratt writes:

They condemned the sophistic ‘style’ for a range of features that, in fact, together sketch a profile of an alternative epistemic field: generic diversity, loose organization, a reliance on narrative, physical pleasure in language production and reception, a holistic psychology of communication, and an emphasis on the aural relation between speaker and listener (72).

This condemnation remains with us today, as part of a philosophical and rhetorical inheritance that often shapes theoretical positions regarding narrative, epistemology, language, and the teaching of writing. Jarratt’s challenge to this inheritance is just one example of the public ways the field of Composition and Rhetoric contemplates, within public view, histories and consequences. Jarratt’s challenge for the field, apart from a call to (re)consider the Sophists, is also a challenge to (re)consider the *mythos/logos* dualism and the long-held prejudices that place *mythos* as subordinate or inferior to *logos*. “I

labor this point,” Jarratt writes, “because of the degree to which poetry and story-telling are today seen as tainted by a kind of irrationality, making them unsuitable means for expressing serious thought and negotiating public discussions” (34).

Jarratt’s work is an important example of what Krista Ratcliffe terms, “rhetorical listening,” (196) just as it is an example of the powerful possibilities within historiography itself. By listening to the public conversations within the field of Rhetoric and Composition with an intent to hear the personal-public and its webbing, or, “...the they in we” (Ratcliffe 220), one can find meaningful and important lines of inquiry that foster a more democratic, culturally contextual, construction of the field. Contextually rupturing the linear map so often noted in Rhetoric’s history as a journey from a burgeoning democratic *polis* to today’s philosophical and rhetorical theories – an inheritance from antiquity already set in stone, in print – also disrupts a male-centric history within Rhetoric and Composition. There have been many notable contextual ruptures within the discipline, particularly during the last thirty years. Most writers of these texts include in their introductions, some personal sense as to what sponsored their drive to see the work through. These motivations are often personal, as in, embodied, as women scholars share a common ache to see, reclaim, and research to find the women who have gone before them. The patriarchal structure of education, of scholarship itself, as Robert Connors notes, “The continuing discipline of rhetoric was shaped by male rituals, male contests, male ideals, and masculine agendas,” and “Women were definitively excluded from all that rhetoric implied” (24). Though the nineteenth century was a historical moment of what Connors terms a “shift” in this masculine-centered sense

of rhetoric (24), the field has experienced contextual disruptions that don't rely on the negation of the male history. The history itself is not overcome – it is affirmed, and then the disjunctions and interrelated histories are explored.

From Cheryl Glenn, the field gets a retelling of Rhetoric's history, one that includes women. As Glenn reminds us, no other intellectual endeavor, "...not even the male bastion of philosophy – has so consciously rendered women invisible and silent" (2). Despite the fact that women have been engaged in philosophical work since (at least) 600 B.C.E. (Glenn citing Mary Ellen Waithe 183), they remain as "interruptions" and silences. However, one should not declare such silence as absentia (Glenn 2). Glenn asserts that even Plato, the same man suspicious of narrative and mythos in Jarratt's account of sophistic history, allowed two women into his Academy. Lasthenia of Mantinea and Axiothea of Philesia were admitted (53), though Axiothea disguised her gender. From Glenn, we get an account of Plato asserting some sense of gender equity for a few, select women within a Greek culture that relegated women to the private sphere. As Glenn writes:

The teacher-Plato who would allow women to penetrate his intellectual sphere would be the same writer-Plato to mention female teachers, Aspasia and Diotima, in his work. So although Plato explores the gendered tensions between domestic and public life and opportunities, although his writings help reconstruct the intellectual, social, and political achievements of some women, he cannot explain those tensions away entirely (53).

Glenn chronicles other well-known historical figures in Rhetoric's history. According to Glenn, Cicero preferred the era of male-dominance in early Rome, when women were equal to barbarians (61-2) because they were constructions of "failed males" (62).

Though laws changed over time and permitted Roman women with a limited sense of public life, “Roman women lived in subjugation in comparison to the most retiring Roman male” (63). Yet, Glenn also provides historical record of upper-class Roman women such as Cornelia, Hortensia, Amasia Sentia and Gaia Afrania, Sempronia, Fulvia, and Octavia while chronicling their public lives (Glenn 66-71).

Glenn’s work to assert women’s rhetorical participation from antiquity to the Renaissance (1997) serves as yet another version of historiography and challenge. What makes Glenn’s work so remarkable, is her deliberate decision to “resist closure,” to consider her work finished. She invites us to join her because, “A re-gendered, retold rhetorical tradition opens up – not closes down – investigation into rhetorical practices” (173). Through Glenn’s work, we are reminded that gender is a language structure, “...a concept borrowed from grammar...” (173) and that her work worries the boundaries of “...gender that have for far too long been easily accepted as nature’s empirical design for masculine superiority, for patriarchal representations of the universal” (173). Even more interesting, when considering the *mythos/logos* dualism positioned by Jarratt, is Glenn’s non-closing use of narrative as she writes an account of her study while constructing a somewhat Aristotelian forensic appeal to our shared future. Glenn suggests four ways for the field, and those in the field, to publicly and privately embark on similar work surrounding gender and rhetorical tradition. Glenn asks us to recognize our common ground (174), explore collaboration in various ways (175), to (re)consider silence as the most “undervalued and *under*-understood traditionally feminine rhetorical site” for scholarship and inquiry (175-6, emphasis original), and to not relegate ourselves to

scrambling for historical bits of women's rhetoric (177). Glenn reminds us that history's treatment (and mistreatment) of women's intellectual and rhetorical work affords us tremendous possibility. "In every disciplinary field," Glenn writes, "the neglect of women in the past has been so complete that the opportunities for exploration and experimentation are rich and plentiful for anyone who wants to do the necessary work" (178). Without her use of narrative at the non-closure of her academic treatise, Glenn's public call to mutual possibility and invitation to share in the responsibility to collect narratives and histories, would not have the same appeal to our mythic sense of shared narrative as a field, as people in a field, as writers and keepers of history and lore. Sometimes the *mythos/logos* dualism, when paired with disruption to the status quo, can sparkle against the backdrop of a sky we thought we already knew by tradition. This serves as an opportunity to explore how our contexts as people, as collaborators, matter beyond the classroom, beyond even the sense of self. When we write toward non-closure and with imprecision, when we work within public to invite the discourses to be turned inward in a moment of personal contemplation for our readers, we help shape the future of the field and its relevance to the larger culture. We make it possible for those who come after us to find their own light, their own way to work through both their personal-public lives.

SECTION II: AN EXPLORATION OF AFFIRMATION

Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald, in *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric* (2001), inspired in part by Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe (among others), embarked on mission in spirit with Glenn's call for collection. Referencing themselves first as teachers of rhetorical tradition, Ritchie and Ronald then posit themselves as those seeking to interrupt the allegedly "seamless" historical record of Rhetoric (xvi). Like Glenn they make wise use of narrative, explaining not just the impetus for their project, but also the questions and complications that arose as they compiled their collection. Guiding their collection is the Aristotelian notion of invention. "The discovery of the available means," Ritchie and Ronald write, "was for Aristotle an act of invention that always assumed the right to speak in the first place and, even prior to that, assumed the right to personhood and self-representation, rights that have not long been available to women (xvii). Their collection reclaims women's rhetorics just as it reclaims Aristotle's words (xvii), even as they point to difference. They valorize women's efforts to be heard, while at the same time contributing to the public discourse a sense that women's rhetoric may be vastly different from the traditional view. As Ritchie and Ronald write:

But we also intend by our title to point to the ways that women have discovered different means of persuasion, often based in contexts other than those Aristotle may have imagined: the kitchen, parlor, and nursery; the garden; the church; the body. Further, women have redefined and subverted traditional means and ends of argument and in the process have reinvented rhetoric based in epistemologies more varied than Aristotle's (xvii).

However, Ritchie and Ronald do not reflect the Platonic notion of negation. They are careful to acknowledge culture, context, and episteme. In this sense, there is a certain sophistic awareness within their work. They acknowledge the male tradition without negating it (xviii), they position themselves with, not against, anthologists Jacqueline Jones Royster and Shirley Wilson Logan. Instead, they invoke a minstrel chorus of possibility, noting that they are not interested in erasing accomplishments that have come before their own. They are, in other words, working within a gap within the public, extroverted tradition in hopes of fostering further study. As Ritchie and Ronald write, “In the absence of any sense of ‘recurring themes’ – common practices, themes, and *topoi* in women’s rhetoric – students and scholars need to posit a tentative tradition if only to begin to have a fruitful and generative conversation about it (xviii).” To think of one’s scholarly work as “tentative” and “generative,” is to also be working beyond the negation binary. It is also within Peter Elbow’s sense of “doubting and believing” – whatever meaning is made is shaped by a tentative, contextual, and I dare I say, sophistic sense of epistemic possibility. By positioning their work as part of a larger contribution, and a humble, careful one at that, Ritchie and Ronald also invite, as Glenn does, future scholarship, future invention. This is no small contribution considering the legacy of women’s suppression within the history and contemporary world of Composition and Rhetoric. What we make visible, we also conceal, as the infamous Kenneth Burke idea goes – and perhaps in time, with our concerted effort to invite invention and inquiry that does not erase or negate others, we may in time, create a representation of the field that can soften the hurt of those who were erased, dismissed, pushed down and aside, and help

their contemporaries find their way into the field, into the community, and into our larger shared world.

In their collection, Ritchie and Ronald recover narrative as a rhetorical and logical enterprise that fits within the *nomos* construction Jarratt articulates for narrative itself. In this between space within the *mythos/logos* dualism, Ritchie and Ronald evoke Andrea Lunsford's call to "listen hard" (6) to women's narratives as sites for theory. "As we have put this anthology together," Ritchie and Ronald write, "we have tried to be the kind of readers who listen hard for theory within texts that often seem largely personal, practical, or occasional" (xxviii). To "listen – and listen hard – (Lunsford 6) is to reconfigure both tradition and the possibility for narrative, to reclaim the pre-Socratic and Sophist use of narrative as a site for intellectual and personal engagement. Even so, the act of recovery does present contextual limits. As Ritchie and Ronald write:

The recovery practice also isolates various communities of women from each other and prevents us from asking questions such as: What rhetorical means have white women borrowed from women of color? What rhetorical strategies does the public rhetoric of late-nineteenth-century African American women have in common with white women's discourse? This form of recovery also isolates women's rhetorics from the masculinist rhetorical tradition, distorting our understanding of women's use of the various means on which they called to speak and write (xix).

As they provide the field with a rich anthology of women's voices and narratives, even as they acknowledge isolation and cultural tensions such a collection may inadvertently erase, Ritchie and Ronald are quite careful to name the public, field context in which their book appears. "We are still nervous about the selections here, concerned that this table of contents might not represent a broad enough range of women's perspectives, that

we have overlooked women writers because of our own disciplinary and historical blinders (xxi-ii). This acknowledgement of Burke's "terministic screens," this articulation of visibility and invisibility, of contextual and subjective "blindness" to others, is yet another important example of a cognitive structure that does not rely on negation. Even more affirming, is the way Ritchie and Ronald at once evoke Aristotelian rhetoric with "available means," while at the same time resisting his sense of fallacious arguments and probability.

Aristotle, in his treatise *On Rhetoric*, in the words of George Kennedy, refers to Chapter 24, "Real and Apparent, or Fallacious Enthymemes," as one written, "...not to teach how to compose fallacious enthymemes, though Aristotle's wording at times seems to imply that, but to help a speaker recognize them when employed by others" (Aristotle 204). At the heart of Aristotle's treatment of fallacious argument is an accusation against Isocrates (a well-known sophist and rhetorician), for using apparent logic instead of "true" or "real" logic in his *Evagoras*. For Aristotle, there is a deep suspicion of probability, of narrative probabilities in particular (205). As Kennedy notes, Aristotle's evocation of "eristics" in sophistic argument, reflect a philosophical tension between the confusion between general and particular, one that positions probability – when suppositions can be exposed through story, but not through Platonic dialectic – as unethical (209). "For some things happen contrary to probability," Aristotle writes, "so what is contrary to probability is also probable. If this is so, the improbable will be probable" (209). Aristotle then points specifically to sophistic argument, to eristics, because the

generalities employed in sophistic argument that do not disclose “the circumstances and reference and manner,” in turn, “makes for deception” (Aristotle 209).

Thus, when Ritchie and Ronald disclose not just their internal questions, but also the disciplinary and subjective limitations of their vision, the call for readers to “listen hard” for probability, for theory within narrative, is both qualified (in Aristotle’s sense) and virtuous. Meaning, because Ritchie and Ronald are so careful to construct the limitations and pressures on their collection, they make it possible for us to imagine and re-imagine women’s rhetorical and theoretical contributions to the “tradition” as probability with a purpose, without creating enthymemes that are, as Aristotle would say, deceptive. This is important within the dualism of *mythos/logos*, because the *nomos*, the common law of the discipline as well as the shared topography of scholarship, positioned by Ritchie and Ronald open up possibilities for further inquiry, for invention and scholarship that does not require one to negate shared histories. In other words, Ritchie and Ronald cast an affirmation, a rich possibility, others can build from and with while contributing to the field. They invite, without violence or erasure, opportunities for introspection – the personal inversion when discourses turn inward to help us shape our own thinking, our own sense of *nomos* within the *logos/mythos* dualism, while exploring the implications of the public beyond matters of genre and convention. They invite an affirmation of the roles language, history, and rhetoric play in our personal-public lives.

SECTION III: IMPLYING CLOSURE FOR THE SAKE OF GENRE

Irish poet and philosophic theologian John O'Donohue, in his book, *Beauty: Rediscovering the True Sources of Compassion, Serenity, and Hope* (2003) writes eloquently of beauty and its source: imagination. I first encountered his work after learning from my mother that our family had Irish roots – something she had never thought to disclose before. When I expressed fascination and a bit of disbelief upon learning my great-grandmothers were named O'Dooley and Murphy, my mother said, “What? Where did you think the dark hair and blue eyes came from, Canada?”

“Why didn't you tell me this before?” I asked, incredulous.

“I dunno. You didn't ask.”

It seems to me that the most interesting and valuable part of history is not the one handed down, but the one you ask for and eventually find. In contemplating my own history as a survivor of domestic violence, in looking at the field's historical dualism between “the personal” and “the public,” I found a space in which to reconfigure personal experience as a public and professional contribution. It was through the tracing of Jarratt's framing of *nomos* and the *mythos/logos* dualism that I first discovered, as a lived and not just read experience, possible names for survivor narratives beyond “personal” and/or “confessional.” The personal-public as an interrelated, intertwined identity location affirms more than it negates, allowing me to say what is largely unspeakable within strictly professional and public discourses. My story, the one I write every day as I teach, is a story of pedagogical practices that are tied to my history. As a victim, I learned to listen hard to my abuser, to take an emotional temperature of the room to note

shifts in mood, and then take action or enact submissiveness. I learned that silence is a rhetorical choice, though at the time I could not see it as the strategy of survival, something valuable beyond those moments of terror. It was through my scholarship and the qualitative experience offered by Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe that I learned silence and listening were not passive enterprises, but active and important choices. As a survivor, I learned that listening, monitoring tensions, using discomfort as a site for discovering new pathways toward understanding, and acknowledging rhetoric as something linked to power, can embolden a timid learner to risk imprecision. These acts embolden by example not because they are brave or novel, but because they are an embodied performance of the story as it is lived and modeled. By modeling the many ways one can transgress a boundary and survive the implications, by demonstrating the possibilities that arise when permeations and ruptures are invited instead of resisted, one can redefine imagination and qualitative experience as being personal-public, located within the self with implications for others.

O'Donohue claims that in each of us, there is a small voice of discernment resistant to the status quo, to the falsities we encounter, all the while beckoning us toward new perspectives and concealed meanings (75). "In extreme situations, which have been emptied of all shelter and tenderness," O'Donohue writes, "that small voice whispers from somewhere beyond and encourages the heart to hold out for dignity, respect, beauty and love" (75). Stepping away from the tradition of negation and moving toward affirmation, particularly within a discipline still unveiling the complications to a linear and patriarchal history, makes room – writing room – for others to bring their voices

forward. When we cull from history the unheard whispers others left for us, as Jarratt, Glenn, Ronald and Ritchie have, even as we encounter tradition's din, we embody a location, a sophistic space that invites the making of new meaning context to context, experience to experience. Considering the public promises the field has made surrounding social justice, equity, and inclusion – locations of deeply personal consequence – writing room, forging pathways of scholarship that are admittedly imprecise and demonstrative could invite others to take the risk of not quite knowing for sure, but sponsoring the inquiry nonetheless. The arrogance of negation is found in its violence, the ways texts are controlled and framed, pushed and pulled, without regard for the people who produced them. If those of us in the field are going to ask our students to be more careful, to listen to others actively, to contemplate the larger social significance of an individual's actions or subject position, it seems reasonable to also ask that of the creators of scholarly texts – the texts often used as referential points on the maps students are asked to chart.

Beyond that, by putting negation up for exploration in order to see disjunctions between ideas as invitations instead of flaws, we can revise the scripts of tradition in ways that include an active engagement with imprecision as a fruitful site of inquiry. We have an opportunity, within the disjunction itself, to clop about and point to inconsistencies, harmony, disharmony, and collision – all the messy things within the will to know – in ways that can sponsor inquiry and invention beyond our more comfortable perspectives in order to see the ways in which the personal-public is rendered visible, enacted. If the body of scholarship the field has produced has proved anything it is this:

The contestations, disjunctions, conflicting ideologies, and the tensions between pedagogical perspectives have built a respectable field. The future of that field, its scholarship and discourses, particularly in the postmodern era of plurality, may depend on a collective, re-imagined sense of qualitative research as inquiry-based, expository endeavor, ripe with imprecision, disjunction, and uncertainty. The personal gain of traditional professional performances, particularly the manufacturing of discourses as published (and therefore credible credential-building texts), may need to be examined as we ask harder questions about the personal-public coordinates of our own professional lives and how they affect both the academy and its students. Few are afforded the comfort of endless repetition – history shows us this – and it seems the most lasting ideas can transcend change while continuing to invite inquiry and interest. By permeating the binaries we encounter every day, by transgressing boundaries with care and tenderness, we may find another inroad to inquiries in order to enrich our qualitative experiences. After all, “The imagination has no patience with repetition,” O’Donohue writes, “Experimentation, adventure, and innovation lure us towards new horizons. What we never thought possible now becomes an urgent and exciting pathway” (146). In imagining scholarly work beyond negation, those who embark on the radically different path of imprecision with personal-public intentions, may be the very future of the field itself because small voices of discernment can become grand and shared visions once freed from the limits of negation and tradition.

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